

**LOURDES A. LEON GUERRERO**  
Ma'gahåga  
**JOSHUA F. TENORIO**  
Sigundon Ma'galåhi



**GUAM BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH AND WELLNESS  
CENTER**

**790 Gov. Carlos G. Camacho Rd.  
Tamuning, Guam 96913  
TEL: (671) 647-1901  
FAX: (671) 649-6948**

**THERESA C. ARRIOLA**  
Direktot  
**CARISSA E. PANGELINAN**  
Sigundon Direktot

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 1, 2023**

### **Guam reports 94.8% compliance of tobacco retail law**

***Tamuning, Guam* - The Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center (GBHWC) in conjunction with the Department of Revenue and Taxation (DRT) conducted the island-wide, annual tobacco retailer compliance inspections. This monitoring activity is mandated by the federal government's Public Law 102-321, the *Synar Amendment*, which requires states and territories that receive Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funds to establish and enforce the minimum legal age for purchasing and using tobacco products. In Guam, GBHWC and DRT are responsible for conducting random and unannounced tobacco retail compliance checks in all 19 villages; compliance rate in 2023 decreased to 94.8% from 97% in 2022 with the addition of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) in this year's inspections.**

GBHWC and DRT as well as the Department of Public Health & Social Services (DPHSS) are all jointly responsible for carrying out Guam Public Law No. 24-278 (Tobacco Control Act of 1998) and Guam Public Law No. 34-01 (Youth Protection Act of 2017); to ensure island-wide efforts for youth tobacco/nicotine use prevention such as controlling retail access for anyone under the legal age of 21.

In 2023, of the 324 tobacco retailers registered with the Department of Revenue and Taxation, thirteen were found in violation of selling tobacco or electronic nicotine products to minors ages 16-20. These establishments were thus issued citations and fines consisting of penalties ranging from \$1,000 up to \$10,000 per violation. This year's (2023) inspections reflect a 94.8% Retail Compliance Rate, maintaining a consistent rate above 90% since 2022.

GBHWC Director Theresa Arriola shares: "The Synar inspection is an annual prevention initiative that allows the government of Guam to ensure, not only strict compliance among retailers of tobacco and e-cigarette policies, but more importantly, eliminating youth's access to these products. The longer we delay tobacco and nicotine use by youth, the better we can protect Guam's population from multiple negative health outcomes and other consequences now and in the future."

"This year's inspection was the first time that electronic nicotine products were included as a result of growing concerns on e-cigarette use among Guam's youth that is above national standards. The increase in violations may imply that prevention work among retailers of e-cigarettes should be focused on in the coming years. Arriola adds: "We hope to continue to maintain compliance rates above 90% and gain community-wide commitment to protect our island's youth from the damaging effects of tobacco and nicotine products."

###

*The current Annual Synar Report is available for community review and feedback through <https://gbhwc.guam.gov/peace>. For more information, contact the Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center's Prevention and Training Branch at [staff@peaceguam.org](mailto:staff@peaceguam.org) or the Synar Coordinator at [hannaruth.defiesta@gbhwc.guam.gov](mailto:hannaruth.defiesta@gbhwc.guam.gov).*