

Examining Sources of Tobacco in King County: Sampling and Pharmacies

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Abstract: Sampling, the distribution of free tobacco products, is a key industry strategy for recruiting and retaining smokers. While King County had banned sampling in the 1990's, a 2007 preemption suit brought by RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company overturned the ban and permitted cigarette sampling to resume. Wholesalers and retailers engaging in sampling activity were required to provide reports of all sampling events that they had conducted in the previous six month period. In late 2008, requirement changed to call for 45 day advanced notice of sampling events. Reports on past sampling events allow us to analyze the volume of distribution, venues targeted and brands sampled. From the overturn of the ban in 2007 to December 2008, 72,430 packs of cigarettes have been given away in King County at over 200 venues. The distribution venues were primarily bars open exclusively to adults 21 or older. Some sampling events have occurred in restaurants that serve all ages, but also have restricted bars and one event has occurred at a principally youth venue (Pacific Science Center). Most sampling has been conducted with RJ Reynolds brands (e.g., Camel) though recently Philip Morris has begun to sample the Marlboro brand. Advanced notice 45 days prior to sampling events will allow our program to monitor events to ensure they comply with sampling regulations on required licenses and appropriate venues. This presentation will discuss protocols for these inspections. Advanced notice will also provide a new intervention point with venue owners and patrons. This presentation will include discussion of community-based initiatives to counter sampling.