

Lowell Tobacco Control Report

August of 2020

Prepared by: Cesar Pungirum, M.M., J.D.
Program Director

Lowell

Inspections

I've been able to complete 29 in-store inspections so far this month. Most violations found had to do with missing new signs required under the new state law. Some retailers didn't have the required manufacturers' letters attesting the nicotine content of vaping products. Vuse Alto vaping devices are being sold for \$0.99 in some cities and towns. I have yet to find them in Lowell or Lawrence.

Pricing Surveys

As the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program (MTCP) has suspended pricing surveys until further notice, we continue to focus on the implementation of the new state law.

Implementation of the new state law: An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control

Although some retailers have been complacent with some of the new state law requirements, which is a behavior consistent with the implementation of previous regulations, they've been cooperative, immediately fixing any problems found. Following enforcement recommendations from MTCP, at this stage of implementation, we're focusing on education. Therefore, no fines have been issued yet, but retailers are being reminded that may occur if the same types of violations continue to be found during future inspections.

Compliance Checks

MTCP continues to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work that we do and is working with local programs to develop enforcement protocols for when they think compliance checks might be safely conducted. So far, MTCP has suspended most programmatic requirements. In fact, some programs have not resumed in-store visits yet.

Tobacco Control Grant Renewal

MTCP has informed us that all contracts have been preliminarily renewed for the sake of starting programs into the new fiscal year. However, they have yet to process all renewal packages, return signed contracts and provide us with further instructions about rolled over funds. Most MTCP leadership staff are still working remotely. It's unclear whether their fiscal staff have resumed regular in-office hours.