

Tobacco Vendor

I own a store that sells tobacco, what can I do to stop tobacco sales to minors?

There are several steps that responsible tobacco vendors are taking to try to stop the sales of tobacco products to minors. These steps include:

- Limiting those authorized to sell tobacco at their establishment to a few well-trained, responsible employees whom they trust. By limiting who can sell, the chance of sales made by young employees under pressure from their peers is less.
- Train all employees who are authorized to sell tobacco. There are now training programs, approved by the State Health Department, designed to teach employees about the importance of not selling tobacco products to minors, and the consequences of selling tobacco products to minors. An added benefit of having trained employees is: when a sale has been made, your establishment faces reduced penalties if it was made by one of the trained employees (Fewer points are assigned for the violation).
- There is no rule that says a retailer cannot ask everyone for ID/proof. While you do not need to check the ID of someone who is obviously old enough to buy tobacco products, you may want to put rules in place that are stricter than those of the government. Some people look a lot older than they are, especially to young employees, so it might not be unreasonable to ask for ID from even people as old as 40, for example.
- If you do not already have a system that requires the employee selling tobacco to enter the customer's birth date before allowing the sale, you may want to consider getting one.
- Run your own in-house compliance checks. Every few months, hire a minor and have him/her go into your establishment and try to make a tobacco purchase. This should reveal any weak links in your current process before the county Health Department does.
- Place a large letter sign in one or more prominent locations in your facility stating: 'We card EVERYONE under 25 years of age for tobacco sales.'

My store sold to a minor during a Health Department compliance check. Will I lose my license?

You will not lose your license to sell tobacco the first time you sell. The current law is designed to be lenient towards vendors who are trying to comply with the law, but may have had an accidental sale. When a sale occurs there will be a hearing, and if found to have sold tobacco products to a minor, a fine and points may be imposed. Your license to sell tobacco products and lottery license however will not be suspended for six months until you accumulate three or more points within a three year period.

Is more information available?

You can visit the following web site(s) for more information:

NY State DOH – List of training classes -

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/smoking/certlist.htm>

NY State DOH – Guide for Vendors -

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/smoking/tobguide.htm>

If Nassau County tobacco retailers have additional questions or concerns regarding The Sale of Tobacco Products to Minors, they should call the NC Department of Health – Adolescent Tobacco (ATUPA) Program (516) 227-9617.