



Mendocino County Bans the Sale of Flavored Tobacco



INTRODUCTION

In November 2020, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors voted to ban the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol-flavored products, by revising their tobacco retail license (TRL). The TRL covers all tobacco retailers in the unincorporated areas of the county and may convince the three incorporated cities to adopt a similar ban.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The Mendocino County Tobacco Control Program (MCTCP) faced two big challenges when they started working on the flavored tobacco policy in 2017. The program had a small, inactive coalition and a high staff turnover rate, which made progress on the policy goal very difficult. Fortunately, in 2018 the program hired a new Project Coordinator who focused on recruiting new coalition members—folks who have strong connections with schools and health organizations. In early 2019, a new Project Director made the coalition even stronger by training members on skills such as how to get on the agenda for council and board meetings. The project staff helped coalition members learn how to use their connections to promote the ban.

SECURING A VICTORY

While coalition members worked hard to raise awareness about a flavored tobacco ban, MCTCP staff worked to build relationships with board members and their legal team. They gave these officials both a solid model policy and evidence of strong support from the community, including letters from local school leaders and public opinion data. Staff also addressed board members' concern that enforcing the policy change might take time away from responding to COVID-19 in the community, noting the existing TRL policy already covered oversight.

Although the MCTCP had an unsteady start in 2017 on its goal to ban the sale of flavored tobacco, the project turned things around by building the coalition and giving members the key resources they needed.

With coalition members driving the initiative, the Board of Supervisors felt confident their vote would benefit the community directly.