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2015 Tobacco Compliance Check Update for Eau Claire County

Eau Claire, WI September 30, 2015 – Retail employees are the front line of defense in preventing youth tobacco use and upholding the laws that prevent the sale of tobacco to those under the age of 18. The average age of first use of tobacco products in Eau Claire County is 13. This is concerning because 80% of adults who are current tobacco users started before the age of 18.

Preventing early tobacco use by decreasing youth access to tobacco products is the goal of the statewide Wisconsin Wins (WI Wins) program. WI Wins is an evidence-based tobacco prevention program. WI Wins is built on an effective mix of education and oversight to help prevent illegal retail tobacco sales to minors. Oversight is provided by local public health staff who work with youth volunteers. To help this effort even more, local law enforcement agencies have joined this mission to support the WI Wins team in Eau Claire County.

Compliance checks are conducted by a trained team of four individuals. Two adults and two underage volunteer inspectors, aged 16-17, conduct unannounced inspections at local tobacco retail establishments. If a sale is not made, retail establishments are congratulated with a letter of appreciation and a certificate of recognition. If a sale is made, the police and/or county sheriff's department is immediately contacted to follow up with the employee and the establishment where the sale occurred.

While WI Wins has delivered measurable results since its debut in 2001, there is still work to be done. To date in 2015, 10 % of tobacco retailers have failed compliance checks in Eau Claire County. Of the 59 tobacco retail establishments that were inspected, six establishments sold a tobacco product to a minor. The end result is a non-compliance rate of 10%. "Targeting youth access to tobacco products is an important public health strategy," says Lieske Giese, Director/Health Officer of the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. "Having 90% of retailers protecting youth is good news."

Education and outreach activities will continue in 2015 to lower the rates of tobacco product sales to minors. Conducting compliance checks is one of many strategies implemented in Eau Claire County to prevent or reduce youth tobacco use. When youth do not have access to tobacco products, then all of Wisconsin Wins!

State law requires that retailers complete tobacco sale training. Free training is available at <https://www.smokecheck.org/>. More details about the Wisconsin Wins program can be found at <http://www.wiwins.org/>

