

City of Saint Paul

Menthol Tobacco Dialogue Meeting

Purpose:

Dialogue involving Ramsey Tobacco Coalition and Neighborhood Retailers Coalition to share information and explore ways to further reduce tobacco use in Saint Paul while maintaining the health of our small businesses.

Format:

For each of the following questions, DSI facilitated individual brainstorming followed by groups of 2 – 4 individuals jointly identifying their top 2 priorities. (Questions for each group is noted in parenthesis.)

Twenty one people attended.

Questions and responses:

- 1) What ideas do you have for how to reduce tobacco's harm on the health of our community? (Neighborhood Retailers Coalition)

What can the community do to address the sharing of tobacco from family and friends to youth? (Ramsey Tobacco Coalition)

Responses:

- Change the statewide legal age to smoke to 21 (7 responses)
- Require use of ID scanners for tobacco purchases (3 responses)
- Provide education to parents and caregivers on harms of tobacco (3 responses)
- Invest in community education (2 responses)
- Help more smokers quit
- Discourage loitering
- Cover up tobacco in stores
- Increase warning signs

- 2) What factors make it difficult for neighborhood retail stores to transition from tobacco to other merchandise? (Both groups)

Responses:

- Limited store space for products (3 responses)
- Time required to transition to other or new merchandise (3 responses)
- Convenience nature of business (3 responses)
 - o Customers that buy cigarettes buy other items (E.g. one retailer indicated 40% of customers buy other merchandise)
 - o If customers are unable to buy their cigarettes, they will not stop in for the other items they would have purchased with the cigarettes
- Cost to remodel for new products or services offered (2 responses)
- Cannot compete with major grocers like Aldi's
- Product size, quantity, and price
- Demand associated with items
- Fear of change – (reference to CVS model, where they discontinued tobacco sales even though Walgreens did not.)

- 3) What things can neighborhood retail stores do to make up for declining tobacco sales? (Both groups)

Responses:

- Already doing many activities; e.g.
 - o Promotions – including giveaways, free coffee, etc.
 - o Pump promos
 - o Market new snacks and drinks
 - o Hot food options
 - o Offer a large variety of convenience items
 - o Refuse to carry other harmful products
 - o Resource fairs for ideas (By companies and Associations)
- Carwashes
- Strong customer service