

For Immediate Release

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## **KANSAS CONTINUES WORK TO REDUCE YOUTH ACCESS TO TOBACCO Annual Compliance Rate Remains Below Target**

Topeka- SRS Acting Secretary Don Jordan announced today that Kansas has continued to maintain compliance with federal requirements regarding the sale of tobacco to minors.

The Kansas Department of Revenue- Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) works with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) to conduct random, unannounced inspections of tobacco retailers. Annually, retail outlets across the state are checked to determine the state's compliance rate. Of those inspected, 80.1% did not sell tobacco products to minors.

The federal Synar Amendment requires states to maintain a compliance rate of 80% or better. At 80.1%, the Kansas compliance rate is improved from a 62% compliance rate recorded in 2004. The state fell below the required target in 2004 and has instituted a comprehensive set of strategies to improve compliance and protect youth from addiction to nicotine.

“This annual review provides a better understanding of the difficulties and successes in enforcing retailer compliance with youth tobacco access laws,” said Jordan. “Our agency’s intention is to maintain a strong focus for continued improvement.”

Kansas has engaged both state and local partners to prevent the sale of tobacco to minors. In addition to enhanced enforcement, communities mobilized to reach retailers through education and incentives. A statewide campaign entitled, “It’s Everybody’s Business,” provides resource materials for retailers to train clerks. Additionally, a statewide incentive-based program was launched during the past year to both educate and reward positive actions by clerks who do the right thing by not selling tobacco to Kansas youth.

Coalitions and organizations will continue to work together in a concentrated effort to improve compliance. SRS, Kansas Regional Prevention Centers, The Kansas Department of Health and Environment/Tobacco Use Prevention Program, ABC, Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition, and Kansas Family Partnership have all been a part of these important efforts.

Tobacco users typically start smoking in early adolescents. Almost all first time use occurs prior to high school graduation. Currently, 29% of high school students report using at least one form of tobacco, according to the Kansas Youth Tobacco Survey. Cigarette smoking is reported by 21% of high school students. An estimated 300 Kansas youth become regular smokers each month.

For help to quit smoking, call the Kansas Tobacco Quit Line at 1-866-KAN-STOP (1-866-526-7867).

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