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Contact: Kelly Dremann

Tobacco Cessation Coordinator/ Health Educator

330-674-5035

kdremann@holmeshealth.org

NEWS RELEASE

Limiting Youth Access to Nicotine Through Checks

Millersburg, OH –

In 2023, 15.0% of Ohio high school and middle school students reported current use of a form of tobacco. E-cigarettes are the most commonly used, with 13.7% of Ohio youth reporting current use. E-cigarettes often contain higher levels of nicotine and can quickly addict young people. Once addicted, it can be difficult to quit and may lead to other health concerns.

Using e-cigarettes and other forms of nicotine can negatively affect a youth's health. E-cigarette use may increase the risk of lung damage, seizures, nausea, and headaches. It may also lead to oral health concerns like tooth decay, gum disease, and bad breath. Youth nicotine use impacts the brain's development, which continues until age twenty-five. This can affect learning, mood, attention, and impulse control. Using e-cigarettes increases their risk of using cigarettes or other forms of tobacco. They may also be more susceptible to addictions to other substances in the future. An additional concern is the negative impact on adolescent mental health. Youth commonly report using nicotine products to alleviate stress and anxiety. However, nicotine use worsens these symptoms. In fact, Ohio youths with frequent poor mental health had higher rates of current e-cigarette use (24.2%), than students without poor mental health (9.2%).

It is illegal to sell tobacco and nicotine products to anyone under the age of twenty-one. Despite this, youth have access to these products through friends, family, online sources, and local retailers. Research has found that it is easier for youth to buy e-

cigarettes in stores than cigarettes. Underaged purchase attempts for e-cigarettes are 35% less likely to prompt an ID request and 42% more likely to result in a sale. This makes limiting youth access to these products all the more important.

Yearly tobacco compliance checks are conducted in Holmes County to ensure that youth access is limited. Of the county's twenty-two tobacco retailers, most are convenience stores (45.5%) or discount stores (22.7%). Millersburg has the greatest number of tobacco retailers, with almost a third of all stores (31.8%). In early 2026, compliance checks were conducted at eighteen stores throughout the county. Sixteen stores were compliant, resulting in the county's overall compliance rate of 88.9%. This is an improvement from the previous year's compliance rate of 75.0%, where one in four stores sold to a minor.

All checked stores received informative letters about the compliance check and its outcome. Non-compliant stores also received resources on the Tobacco 21 law and ID verification. By checking the age on IDs, local tobacco retailers play a vital part in preventing youth tobacco use. These efforts go a long way to keep addictive products out of the hands of our community's youth.

For questions or concerns regarding the compliance checks, please contact Kelly Dremann, Tobacco Cessation Coordinator, at the Holmes County General Health District, by calling 330-674-5035, ext. 224.