

**For Immediate Release**  
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Contact: Nicholas Charest  
508-991-6269  
[Nicholas.charest@newbedford-ma.gov](mailto:Nicholas.charest@newbedford-ma.gov)

## **VISIBLE SIGNS TO HELP CUT CIGARETTE SALES TO MINORS**

**New Bedford, Massachusetts**-Powerful messages reminding retailers and consumers about the law prohibiting the sale of tobacco to minors are now more visible than ever throughout Southeastern Massachusetts, thanks to an educational campaign developed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Tobacco Control Program. The “Under 27” educational campaign aims to increase knowledge among tobacco retailers, their employees, and the general public about the Attorney General’s regulation and local Board of Health Tobacco Control Regulations that require retailers to ask for ID from anyone attempting to purchase tobacco products that appears to be under the age of 27. Recently, staff from the Greater New Bedford Tobacco Control Program, the Cape Cod Regional Tobacco Control Program and the Fall River South Coast Tobacco Control Program collaborated and visited approximately 500 tobacco retailers in Bristol County. They offered the “Under 27” campaign promotional materials to storeowners and encouraged the retailers to spread the word about not selling tobacco products to minors. Retailer education kits and store window display posters carry the distinctive “Under 27” message.

“The promotional items were well received by a sampling of 118 retailers who participated in the project,” said Marianne B. De Souza, Director of Public Health for the City of New Bedford and long term tobacco prevention advocate. “Many of the retailers displayed the promotional materials prominently in their establishments. Most of the retailers in our community are anxious to abide by the laws and protect our youth.”

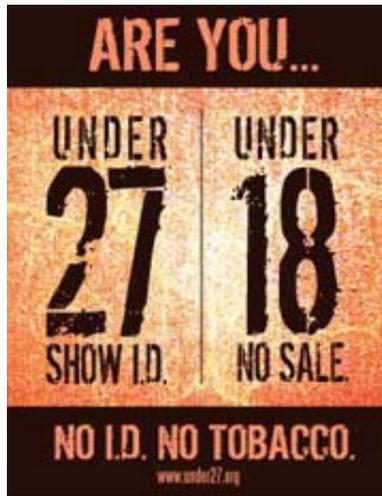
The Greater New Bedford Tobacco Control Program Boards of Health Collaborative serving Dartmouth, Fairhaven, and New Bedford, works to educate retailers and conducts random checks to ensure retailer compliance with the law prohibiting the sale of tobacco to minors and the smoke-free workplace laws. Nicholas Charest, Program Director, and staff visit in the collaborative communities twice annually, providing them with signage, training and other support to assist them in compliance with these laws.

Many communities across Massachusetts experienced funding cuts in FY 2003 that halted local programs’ efforts to prevent youth from buying tobacco. In FY 2007, many of these local programs received funding to renew their activities. As a result, tobacco sales to youth across the Commonwealth have plummeted over the past year.

Massachusetts’ law prohibits the sale of any tobacco products to any individual under the age of 18. In addition, local Board of Health Tobacco Control Regulations, as well as, Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office Regulations require retailers to ask for a government issued photo ID from anyone attempting to purchase tobacco that appears to be under age 27. The Greater New Bedford Tobacco Control Program is charged with ensuring compliance with state and local tobacco control regulations for the tri-community Boards of Health Collaborative.

The “Under 27” campaign is jointly sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Office of Attorney General Martha Coakley. The Greater New Bedford Tobacco Control Program’s main goal is to establish strong partnerships with local boards of health and other community organizations to promote strategies to reduce youth access to tobacco.

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