

Summary of the Synar Amendment

- The Synar Amendment, Section 1926 of the federal Public Health Services Act, was passed in 1992. The aim of the law is to prevent and reduce tobacco use among young people. This federal law requires all states to conduct specific activities to reduce youth access to tobacco products, particularly in retail settings.
- It is administered through the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant. NC DHHS, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (MHDDSAS) and coordination with Alcohol Law Enforcement. This Division is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Synar Amendment. Strategies used to effectively implement the state program include: 1) policy and regulatory approaches, 2) merchant education and training, 3) enforcement of tobacco access laws and 4) community education and mobilization.
- The state made significant progress in reducing youth access to tobacco products since the first survey was conducted in 1996. At that time, about 50% of the retail outlets inspected sold tobacco products to a minor. Over the years, the state has seen steady declines in the Retailer Violation Rates (RVR) from 50% to as low as 10% in 2006 and 2010.
- The RVR has remained less than 20% since 2000; however, the rates have increased from 2011-2014 (**13.5%, 15.1% to 18.2%**)
- If N.C. does not maintain a consistent level of enforcement with an agency that has statewide jurisdiction and the increasing trend in the RVR continues, the state expects to exceed the 20% maximum level target. This will put at risk almost **\$16,000,000 (40% penalty)** in the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funding.
- N.C. has had an enforcement program since 1997 through a contract with Alcohol Law Enforcement (ALE) because of: 1) Executive Order 123 (signed by then Governor Hunt on Dec 18, 1997) which designated ALE as the lead agency for enforcement of the state law (NCGS 14-313) and 2) dedicated funding to the program from the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) Commission. However, funding of the state enforcement program has been reduced significantly since 2012, given the abolishment of HWTF funding, with no stable funding currently available. In addition, since September 2014, ALE has not been able to consistently conduct tobacco compliance checks statewide due to changes in their scope of work; however, they continue to support some education and enforcement of the law through retailer education and training as well as through observational inspections of ABC outlets.