

February 10, 2017

Raising the Minimum Legal Sales Age to 21 (T21)

Adolescent brains are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine, and the initiation age of tobacco use is critical. Among adults who become daily smokers, approximately 90% report first use before reaching 19 years of age, and almost 100% report first use before age 26¹. The majority of underage users rely on social sources—like family and friends—to get tobacco², so raising the minimum legal sales age to 21 will mean that those who can legally obtain tobacco are less likely to be in the same social networks as high school students.

Tobacco 21 policies should **not** include minor in possession laws; research has not found that youth who are using these products will stop if they are legally penalized³. Additionally, in order to achieve significant changes in youth tobacco access, there must be robust enforcement activities to ensure retailer compliance with all laws and regulations for the sale of tobacco products⁴.

If the minimum legal age were raised to 21 and implemented now across the US, there would be approximately 223,000 fewer premature deaths for those born between 2000 and 2019.

- *Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products 2015* Institute of Medicine Report



2014 Multnomah County Tobacco Retail Assessment

Contacts:

Claudia Black

Director, Office of Government Relations

Multnomah County

claudia.black@multco.us

503-789-3162

Rosa Klein

Deputy Director, Office of Government Relations

Multnomah County

rosa.klein@multco.us

617-447-9833

¹ US Dept of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. 2012

² Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, 2015

³ Wakefield M, Giovno G. Teen penalties for tobacco possession, use and purchase: Evidence and issues. *Tobacco Control* 2003;12:i6-i13.

⁴ See, e.g., Stead, L & Lancaster, T, "Interventions for preventing tobacco sales to minors," Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (1), January 25, 2005 [update of prior research review]