



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health Department and Prevention Council Team Up to Protect Youth Against Tobacco

BREWSTER, NY—Results are in from the recent Tobacco 21 compliance check visits to local tobacco and vape shops. Out of 29 shops visited around the county from June 12 through August 12, none were found to be selling to young people. Tobacco 21 legislation went into effect earlier this year, making it illegal to sell tobacco, nicotine and vaping products to anyone under the age of 21. Previously the legal age to buy these products had been 18, and these compliance checks continue with distinct compliance result numbers under the longstanding ATUPA program, so named after the Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act.

“These compliance check results for Tobacco 21 are good news,” said County Executive MaryEllen Odell, who was in support of the new legislation. “The Prevention Council of Putnam and our health department have done a good job of educating the public, legislators and now retail establishments. Obviously the word has been spread and stores are following the law. Vaping has become a serious problem in our schools. This should help reduce that.” Last fall she had thanked legislators for coming together on Tobacco 21, noting that “the health of our young people has prevailed.”

Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, said that “many youth think vape products are a safe alternative to traditional cigarettes, but nothing can be further from the truth. There are a host of harmful ingredients, some of which are carcinogenic, in electronic cigarettes. Our staff have worked closely supervising local youth visits to Putnam’s retail establishments to see if they would be able to purchase these items. We have had positive results with respect to enforcement of this much needed public health law.”

Executive Director of The Prevention Council of Putnam Kristin McConnell thanked the health department for their enforcement efforts, saying “We have worked together to educate around this Tobacco 21 for some time. But having a law on the books is just the first step. Without enforcement, there is no real health benefit.”

For more than 20 years, the health department has coordinated youth visits to retail establishments to ensure tobacco products were not being sold to minors under 18, through ATUPA. Now with the sponsorship of the Prevention Council of Putnam, the compliance check program has been expanded and includes enforcement of Tobacco 21, which passed the Putnam legislature late last year. Statewide Tobacco 21 recently passed in Albany and will go into effect on November 13.

The Prevention Council of Putnam County is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1985. Its mission is promote education and awareness related to substance use disorders and problem gambling to the residents of Putnam County and the surrounding area, by providing up-to-date information and services related to prevention, treatment and recovery.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County

community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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