

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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### **Health Department conducting first assessment of tobacco retail in Douglas County**

**(Lawrence, KS)** – The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department is working with Yvonne Chen, a University of Kansas journalism professor, to conduct the first assessment of tobacco and e-cigarette retail environments in Douglas County. Staff members are surveying about 90 stores that have a tobacco and e-cigarette license to determine if they are marketing to youth.

The assessments take about 15 minutes each and look at items such as the cost of a pack of cigarettes, variety of smokeless tobacco products and the location of advertising inside and outside the stores. The assessments are expected to be complete by June 1 and the results will be shared with the community.

Health Promotions Specialist Erica Anderson, of the Health Department, said the assessment would help determine to what degree Douglas County youth are being exposed to tobacco marketing. A report released in April 2015 from Tobacco-Free Kids revealed that tobacco companies spent \$9.6 billion on marketing in the U.S. with an estimated \$82.6 million in Kansas. Research has shown that tobacco marketing influences adolescent nonsmokers to start using tobacco products. Anderson said, “We hope this information will help us develop strategies to counter the tobacco messaging that is aimed at youth.”

She said retailers have been receptive to the assessments. “Managers have welcomed our staff into the stores and some have even provided personal stories about their own tobacco use — how they got started and how they are having trouble quitting.”

The tobacco assessment is part of the Health Department’s work to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke and is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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