

Twenty-One (21) is the new age to buy and sell tobacco in Illinois

What retailers need to know about the law

In April 2019, Illinois passed a “Tobacco 21” law, raising the minimum legal age to buy and sell tobacco products from 18 to 21 years old. In an effort to improve understanding and ensure compliance with the law, Respiratory Health Association has created this fact sheet for Illinois tobacco retailers.

Here is what retailers in Illinois need to know to stay in compliance with the new law

- The new law goes into effect July 1, 2019.
- It is illegal to sell, give away, deliver, or exchange tobacco products to people under age 21.
- The new law covers all tobacco products, which include cigarettes, e-cigarettes and vaping products including Juul, other tobacco products including cigars, and alternative nicotine products.
- Retailers must check the ID of any person purchasing tobacco to verify they are at least 21 years of age.
- The employee, vendor, or agent selling tobacco must also be at least 21 years of age.
- Retailers are required to post appropriate signage.

Violation of the age restrictions can result in revocation of the tobacco retailer’s license

Why this law is important for Illinois residents

- 95 percent of smokers begin by age 21. If a young person can make it past 21 without using tobacco, the odds are they will never start.
- Currently, 18.6% of high school students in Illinois use tobacco products. If we don’t reduce youth tobacco use, it will cost our community billions in healthcare costs and lives lost.
- Age 21 keeps legal tobacco purchases out of our high schools.
- 75% of adults, including 70% of smokers, support Tobacco 21.
- Multiple states have passed Tobacco 21 policies, and the momentum continues to grow nationally.

Thank you for helping protect the young people of Illinois and improving our community’s health!