

# TOBACCO 21 IN ILLINOIS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the new Tobacco 21 law?**

As of July 1, 2019, Illinois law now requires people to be at least 21 years old to purchase tobacco products.

### **What products does the law apply to?**

The new law covers all tobacco products including cigarettes, e-cigarettes and vaping products including Juul, other tobacco products including cigars and alternative nicotine products.

### **Why was this law passed?**

Reducing teens' access to tobacco products is a proven means to reduce current use and prevent initiation. In Illinois, 4,800 teens become new daily smokers each year. While great strides have been made in tobacco prevention, declines in tobacco use rates have slowed and over 18% of Illinois high school students currently use tobacco products. If we don't reduce youth tobacco use, it will cost our community billions in healthcare costs and lives lost.

### **Was there much support for this legislation?**

Polling has shown that Illinois voters statewide approve of this measure by a two-to-one margin. A CDC study found that 75 percent of adults support Tobacco 21, including 70 percent of smokers. Illinois' bipartisan legislation had 68 lawmakers signed on as cosponsors to this legislation. Across the state, 37 Illinois communities adopted their own Tobacco 21 ordinances.

**Why was the purchase age set at 21?**

Research shows that 95 percent of smokers start before the age of 21. If young people can make it past 21 without using tobacco, the odds are they will never start. This policy gets tobacco out of high school students' social circles. The age of 21 also makes the policy consistent with alcohol.

**What impact is this policy expected to have?**

The Institute of Medicine estimates that raising the purchase age to 21 could reduce overall smoking by 12 percent by the time today's teenagers become adults. Tobacco 21 can improve community health by reducing premature births, SIDS and deaths due to smoking.

Tobacco 21 will also reduce the burden on Illinois' healthcare system. Tobacco use currently costs Illinois \$5.49 billion in annual healthcare costs and \$1.9 billion in Medicaid costs.

**What enforcement mechanism needs to be developed for 21?**

This legislation changes the age for compliance checks for tobacco retailers. Enforcement will be the same as existing enforcement for tobacco sales. For questions regarding enforcement, contact your local health department.