

Prevention Legislative Forum

Tuesday, January 14, 2025



Welcome & Introductions

- Welcome elected officials and attendees.
- Each elected official has received information briefs on topics we will discuss today.
- You are invited to respond to our presentation.
- All are welcome to ask questions using the Q/A box.

Agenda

- Introductions
- State of Youth in Darien, Greenwich, and Stamford
- Tobacco Merchant Education
- Density of Tobacco Retail Outlets
- Tobacco Retailer Compliance
- Tobacco Flavored Products
- Alcohol: Education, Carding, Co-branding, Self-checkout Sales, Parental Consent
- Prevention Funding at the Local Level
- New Trends: Kratom
- Update: Tobacco Health Trust Fund

Local Prevention Councils & Youth Services Bureaus

- Local Prevention Councils (LPCs)
 - Coalitions of 12+ stakeholder sectors located in each municipality.
 - Use public health model to address risky behaviors and promote mental wellness.
 - Increase public awareness of alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention.
 - Encourage development and implementation of local prevention activities, focus on youth.
 - Many address social-emotional health, including suicide prevention, recognizing the strong relationship between substance misuse and mental health disorders.
- Youth Services Bureaus (YSBs)
 - Guided by state statute.
 - They are “the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up services” for children and youth.
 - Their services are designed to “meet the needs of youth by the diversion of troubled youth from the justice system as well as by the provision of opportunities for all youth to function as responsible members of their communities” (C.G.S. section 10-19m; see Appendix A).



The State of Our Youth

- All YSBs are guided by the same mandate, yet each is unique and reflects their own community.
 - Flexible and responsive to dynamic community needs.
- Section 23 of Public Act #24-45
 - Boards of Education must enter into a memorandum of understanding with YSBs to establish procedures for release of student information.
 - Through the MOU, YSB staff is considered a “school official”.
 - Entitled, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), to receive relevant personally identifiable student data.
 - School-level data and data collected by LPCs inform the work of YSBs.
- Dalio Report, 119,000 Disconnected Youth in Connecticut

Darien

- <=10% at-risk of not graduating
- >10-20% disconnection after 9th grade

Greenwich

- 11-20% at-risk of not graduating
- >10-20% disconnection after 9th grade

Stamford

- 20-30% at-risk of not graduating
- >30-40% disconnection after 9th grade

Youth Protective and Risk Factors

Protective Factors

- Feeling safe at school
- Having a trusted adult
- Feeling safe in community
- Knowing how to get help



Risk Factors

- Mental health concerns
- Substance Use
- Social Media
- Gaming
- Irregular Eating
- Gambling
- Social norms for alcohol

Members of the LGBTQ+ community report significantly more risk factors.

Sources: Youth Survey Reports for each community;
Darien report, click [here](#).
Stamford report, click [here](#).
Greenwich report, click [here](#).

Tobacco Merchant Education

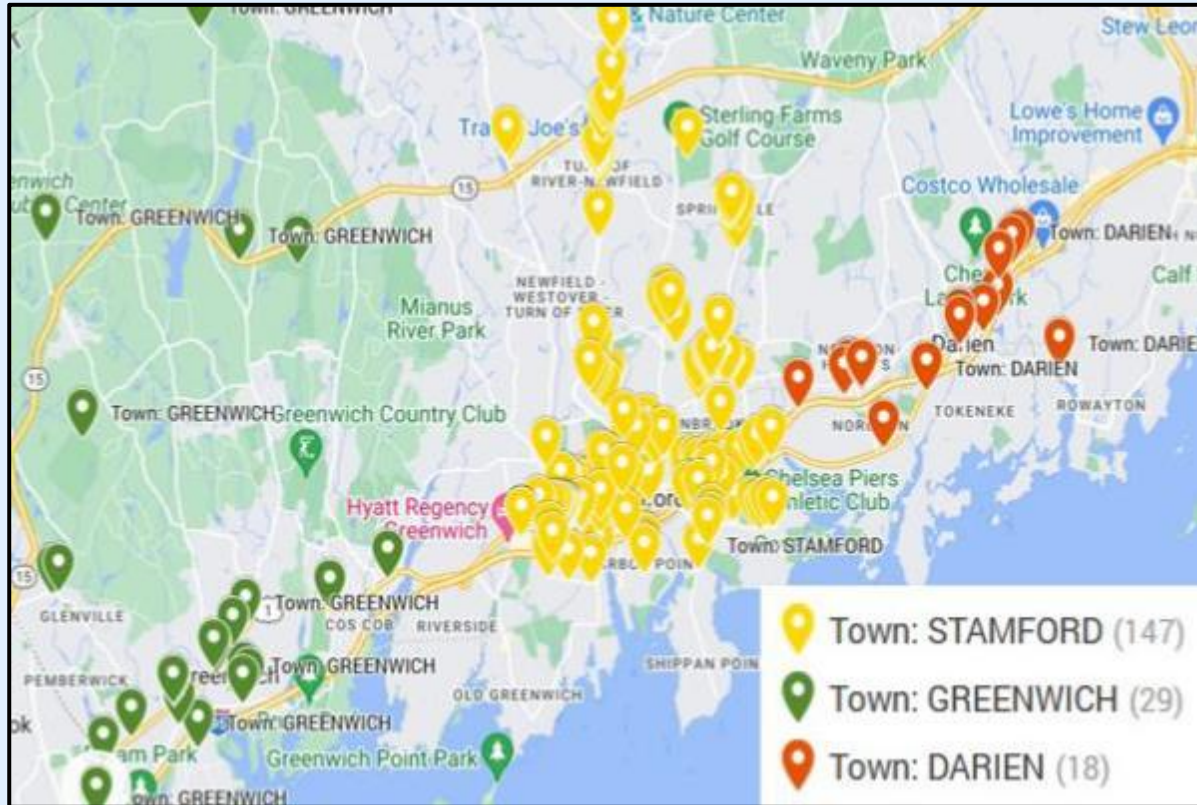
Concerns

- Nicotine is toxic for developing adolescent brains.
- Education can support age verification (“carding”) and curb teen use.
- Current merchant training is reactive, not proactive
 - Participation from merchants low
 - Optional but can retroactively waive first violation fines
- New legislation on training does not include anything except electronic nicotine delivery systems (Public Act 24-54)

Would you consider?

- Expand mandated training for owners and/or managers to include all tobacco products, perhaps as part of the licensing process.
- Owners and/or managers be subject to fines if they do not take reasonable steps to ensure that front-line clerks are trained.
- Incentives for clerk to complete training by changing the existing policy so that they could only avoid a fine for a first violation if they had already completed the training.

Tobacco Retailer Density in Darien, Greenwich, & Stamford



Density of Tobacco Retail Outlets

Impact of density

- Increases tobacco product use rates by youth
- The density is frequently higher in disadvantaged neighborhoods
- Changes in zoning regulations can have an impact on retailer density
 - Stamford recently introduced restrictions on locations and have not had new applications
 - NYC introduced a density cap in 2018 and the density of retailers has fallen significantly

Would you consider?

- Statewide cap on the number of licenses issued for selling any tobacco products
- Require a minimum distance between retailers statewide
- Require a minimum distance from schools and youth-sensitive areas statewide

Tobacco Retailer Compliance



Concerns/Challenges

- Owners are not necessarily subject to state fines irrespective of how many compliance violations a store faces.
- Although fines for the second and third infractions for the person who fails the test are increased, the fine for the first violation can be waived and the amounts for the second and third violations may not be sufficient to disincentivize the practice.
- Consequences for sales of illegal products are not clearly defined and, so far, have only been pursued in civil court (lawsuits).
- The compliance check process is complicated and involves numerous state and local bodies.
- Police departments currently do not have sufficient resources to administer tests on a regular basis.

Would you consider?

- Ensure the owner is subject to a fine for every incident of noncompliance.
- Increase the fine for second and third infractions.
Rationale: First time is akin to a warning and can be waived if the person takes the merchant education training.
- Develop a commission to regulate tobacco, vape and cannabis sales
- Develop and fund regional teams of youth, along with a trained officer, to support consistent compliance checks in local communities.
- Provide funding to police departments to conduct regular, random compliance checks.

Flavored Tobacco Products

Concerns

- **Youth Addiction:**
Flavored products (e.g., fruit, mint) drive youth initiation and long-term nicotine use.
- **Brain Impact:**
Nicotine exposure impairs adolescent brain development, learning, and memory.
- **Trends:**
Rising popularity of discreet, youth-friendly products like nicotine pouches and smokeless tobacco.
- **Policy Effectiveness:**
Comprehensive flavored tobacco bans (e.g., Massachusetts) reduce usage without driving cross-border sales.

Would you consider?

- **Banning the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products:** Eliminate all flavored tobacco, including e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches, to reduce youth initiation and long-term addiction.
- **Strengthening Advertising Restrictions:** Prohibit advertising near schools, youth-focused areas, and on social media to curb targeted marketing to minors.



Alcohol



Impact

- **Brain Impact:** Earlier adolescent alcohol use can cause lasting mental health disorders, trouble in school or with the law and/or using other substances.
- **Trends:** An increase of co-branded alcoholic beverages are more attractive to youth and the ability to discreetly buy it at self-checkouts. Current self-checkout trend with youth: [Co-branded self-checkout trend video](#)
- **Youth:** Easy access and parental permission lead to adolescent alcohol use.

Would you consider?

- Mandatory Education/Training for alcohol retailers and sellers
- Recommended carding age
- Restrictions for “co-branded” alcoholic beverage sales
- Prohibit purchasing alcoholic and N/A beverages at self-checkouts
- Prohibit underage drinking with parental consent

Prevention Funding at the Local Level

Key Points & Concerns

- Communities can apply for Local Prevention Council (LPC) Grant between \$2-10K with a focus on Vaping & State Opioid Response grant (SOR) Grant for \$5,000.
- Darien, Greenwich and Stamford have made strides in their prevention work with time limited funding through additional grants such as the 5 year Drug Free Communities Grant (DFC).
- Sustainability: What happens after time limited funding ends?
- Communities are up against astronomical advertising budgets of alcohol and tobacco companies.
- Local health departments have limited capacity to take this on.

Would you consider?

- Allocating sustainable and flexible prevention funding directly to local communities.
- Avoid overly-specific deliverables



New Trends and Updates, Kratom

What is Kratom?

A tropical tree from Southeast Asia, consumed as capsules, teas, and extracts, with stimulant and sedative effects.

Concerns

- **Addiction Risk:** Activates opioid receptors, leading to dependence and withdrawal symptoms.
- **Health Risks:** FDA warnings about safety, contamination, and lack of medical approval.
- **Poison Control Data:** Over 1,500 cases reported in 2021.
- **Youth Access:** Unregulated sales may increase early exposure and addiction risks.
- **Legal Ambiguity:** Legal but unregulated at the federal level, creating enforcement challenges.

Would you consider?

- **Product Regulation:** Implementing safety standards, labeling, contaminant testing, and dosage limits.
- **Age Restrictions:** Prohibiting sales to individuals under 21 and enforcing ID verification.



Kratom at local smoke shops in Stamford & Greenwich

New Trends & Updates

Nicotine Oral Pouches



Tobacco Health Trust Fund (THTF)

- Thank you for your support!
- Update

Consider: Update

- The study also finds that nearly three-quarters (73%) of young people who have ever used nicotine pouches are current nicotine pouch users, which is higher than patterns typically seen with other tobacco products (Truth Initiative, Jul 2023).
- The THTF is a critical source of funding for tobacco prevention and cessation efforts.

Working Together to Effect Positive Change



Programs Target Individuals



Population: Policies, Systems & Environments

Making positive changes for individuals requires the collective and coordinated efforts of programs offered by local entities (YSBs and coalitions) and policies determined by regulators and lawmakers.

Thank you for joining us today!

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