

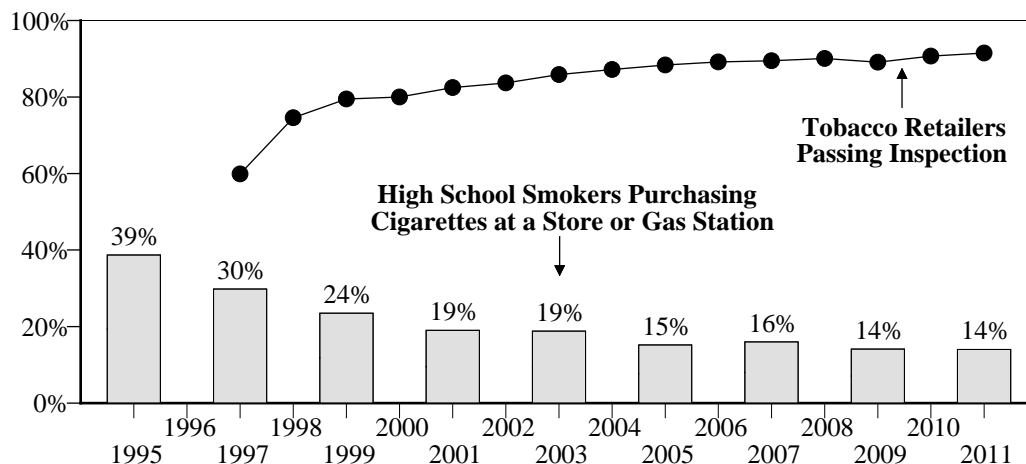
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

## *As Tobacco Retailers Continue to Comply with Underage Tobacco Sales Laws, Fewer Underage Smokers Are Able to Purchase Cigarettes*

U.S. tobacco retailers continue to comply with underage tobacco sales laws, according to data from the most recent annual Synar report. U.S. states and jurisdictions are required to not only have laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to those younger than 18, but also to conduct annual random, unannounced inspections of a valid sample of tobacco retailers accessible to youth to ensure compliance with these laws. The average national compliance rate from these inspections has increased from a baseline of 59% in FY1997 to a record high of 91.5% in FY2004. At the same time, underage smokers are substantially less likely to report being able to purchase cigarettes in stores or gas stations. According to data from the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the percentage of U.S. high school current smokers who had purchased cigarettes at a store or gas station in the past 30 days decreased from 39% in 1995 to 14% in 2011. According to the authors, “while this drop is not attributable to the Synar program alone, the Synar requirements have contributed to a culture change in which youth tobacco use is discouraged” (p. 5).

### **As the Average National Percentage of Tobacco Retailers Passing Inspections Has Increased, the Percentage of High School Current Smokers Who Purchased Cigarettes at a Store or Gas Station in the Past 30 Days Has Decreased**



NOTES: Tobacco retailer inspection years are in Federal Fiscal Years (from 10/1 to 9/30). High school smokers were youth younger than 18 who had smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days prior to the survey.

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *FFY2011 Annual Synar Reports: Tobacco Sales to Youth*, 2012 (available online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/prevention/2011-Annual-Synar-Report.pdf>) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *1991-2011 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data*, accessed 8/9/12 (available online at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline>).