



TOBACCO RETAILER ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Summer 2026

DuPage County Health Department

DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform





This project was made possible by funds
received from the
Illinois Department of Public Health

BACKGROUND



- Tobacco, THC derivatives and kratom/synthetic kratom pose significant and multiple health risks in our communities.
- Increased retailer density in communities has been associated with:
 - Greater initiation of use
 - Higher prevalence of use
 - Increased challenges with cessation
- The wide range of products sold, and promotional and marketing strategies retailers use increases risk to communities by directing efforts to young and vulnerable audiences
- Public health environmental scans provide a systematic way of collecting data about communities to document their features, assess risks and plan interventions



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Overarching Research Questions
 - Distribution and density of tobacco retailers across DuPage County
 - Tobacco, THC and kratom products sold
 - Marketing strategies employed to build interest and use
- Today's Focus
 - Kratom/synthetic kratom products sold
 - Marketing strategies, focus on vulnerable population

Distribution and Frequency of Product Sales by Retailer Type



Product	Percent of Stores Selling:						
	Convenience Store	Gas Station	Liquor Store	Pharmacy Drug Retail Store	Specialty Food Store	Supermarket Grocery	Smoke Shops
Cigarettes	100%	100%	93%	100%	0%	88%	65%
Cigars	78%	75%	79%	79%	0%	50%	67%
Cigarillos	94%	90%	90%	93%	0%	63%	75%
Smokeless/chewing tobacco	78%	79%	38%	79%	0%	50%	68%
Nicotine pouches	94%	96%	59%	93%	0%	50%	77%
e-Cigs/Vapes	94%	90%	79%	79%	100%	25%	95%
Heated tobacco	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	51%
Hookah	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	13%	61%
Loose tobacco	39%	15%	14%	14%	0%	25%	84%
Kratom/synthetic Kratom	11%	21%	3%	0%	0%	0%	89%
THC-edible, smokable	17%	12%	14%	0%	0%	13%	84%
THC drink	17%	14%	52%	0%	0%	13%	26%
Other	0%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	11%
Number of product types sold by retailer	10	12	12	7	1	10	13
75%-100% sampled retailers sold product	50%-74% sampled retailers sold product		25%-49% sampled retailers sold product		1% - 24% sampled retailers sold product		0% sampled retailers sold product



FINDINGS: KRATOM & SYNTHETIC KRATOM

- Kratom: tropical plant that produces stimulant and sedative effects; at high enough doses, opioid-like and psychotic symptoms
- Synthetic products concentrate kratom's psychoactive properties, increasing potency: 7-OH, mitragynine, pseudoindoxyl
- Historically unclassified, temporary Schedule One status recently passed for some (but not all) synthetic kratom products.





FINDINGS: KRATOM & SYNTHETIC KRATOM

- Over 1/3 of retailers sold kratom/synthetic kratom products
 - 89% of smoke/vape shops
 - Over 1 in 5 gas stations, 1 in 10 convenience stores
- Kratom products sold in multiple forms: powder, pill, tablet, drink, different colors promise different effects





FINDINGS: KRATOM & SYNTHETIC KRATOM

Troubling take aways

- Youth Directed Marketing of Kratom/Synthetic Kratom
- Low-Cost Entry and Single Serving



FINDINGS: KRATOM & SYNTHETIC KRATOM



Troubling take
aways

- Misleading Marketing Claims
- Misleading Dosing/Serving Size

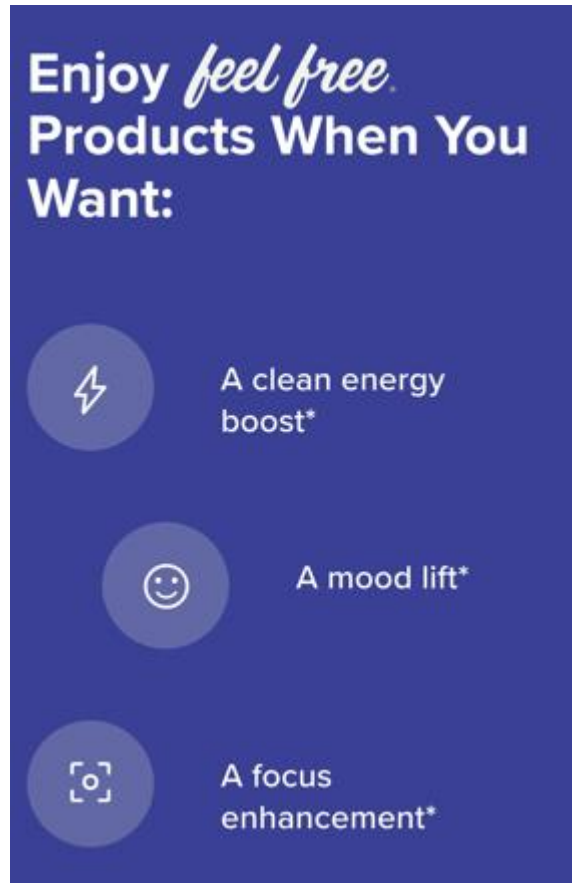


FINDINGS: KRATOM & SYNTHETIC KRATOM



Troubling take aways

- Misleading Marketing Claims
 - mood, energy, focus claims
- Misleading Dosing/Serving Size





Feel Free Energy Drink Product Information

ADULTS 21+ ONLY
KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN

Supplement Facts

Serving Size: 1 fl oz (29.6 mL)
Servings Per Container: 2

	Amount Per Serving	%DV
Iron	0.4 mg	4%*
Kava root (extract)		
Total Kavalactones	260 mg	†
Leaf kratom (ground)		
Total Alkaloids	34 mg	†
Mitragynine	20 mg	†
7-hydroxymitragynine	<0.05 mg	†

* Percent Daily Value (DV) based on a 2,000 calorie diet.
† Daily Value (DV) not established.

Other ingredients: water, pineapple juice, natural flavors, stevia leaf, citric acid.

REV #005

DIRECTIONS: ONLY TAKE 1 OZ (1/2 BOTTLE) BY MOUTH AT A TIME. DO NOT EXCEED 2 OZ (1 BOTTLE) IN A 24-HOUR PERIOD. SHAKE WELL. REFRIGERATE AFTER OPENING.

Warning: This product contains leaf kratom which, like caffeine and alcohol, can become habit-forming and harmful to your health if consumed irresponsibly. **Consider avoiding any potentially habit-forming substances if you have a history of substance abuse.** If consumed in recommended quantities, *feel free* CLASSIC has not been shown to cause any serious physical or social harm. **Caution:** This product is not for consumption by or sale to persons under the age of 21. This product may interact with certain medications or substances—consult a qualified healthcare professional prior to use. Do not consume or mix with excessive alcohol. **This product is not intended for pregnant or nursing women, or persons who are sensitive to the active ingredients.**

FINDINGS: ADVERTISING & MARKETING

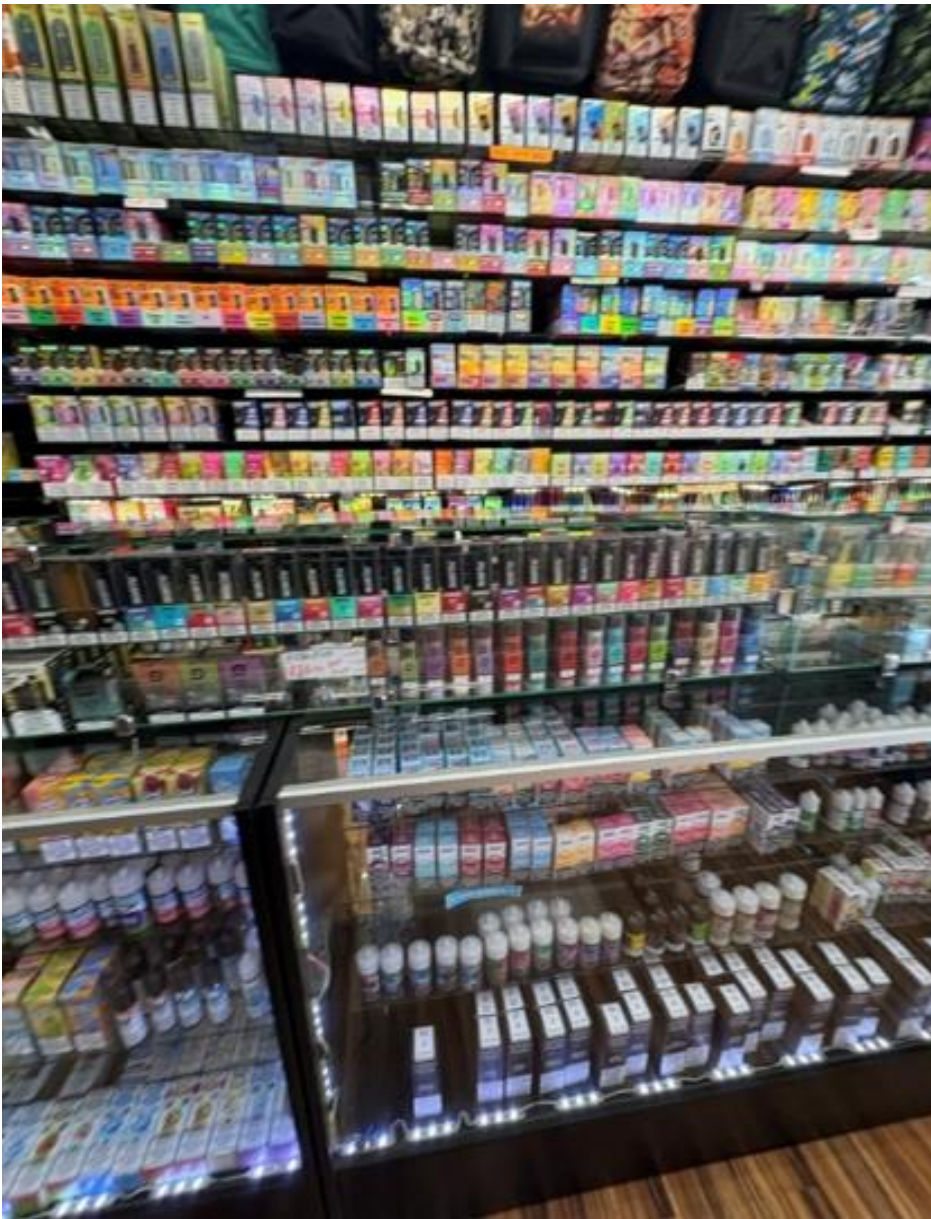


- Heavy use of strategies to appeal to youth
 - Imagery that appeals to youth
 - Packaging to mimic standard candy, snacks
 - Product placement
- Almost 6 of 10 of retailers (59%) placed products near toys, candy or snacks
- Placement influences experimentation, initiation and continued use





RETAILERS THAT
DIDN'T HAVE
ADVERTISING
TYPICALLY HAD
FLOOR TO CEILING
WALLS OF PRODUCTS



FINDINGS: DISCOUNTS & PRICE PROMOTIONS

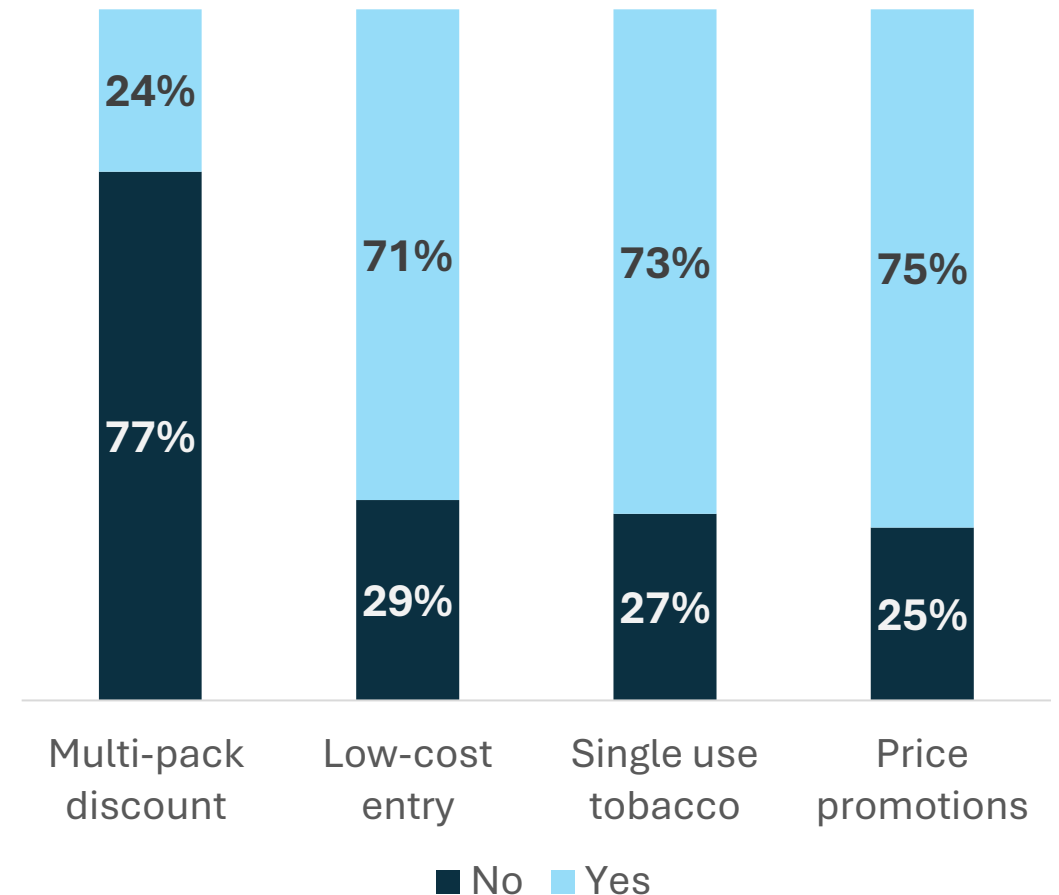


Single use, low cost, disposable products associated with greater use among vulnerable audiences

- Adolescent/YA
- Low Income

Strong majority of retailers use these discount and promotion strategies

Percent of Retailers that Offer Discounts & Price Promotions



FINDINGS: DISCOUNTS & PRICE PROMOTIONS



2 tobacco cigars for
under \$1

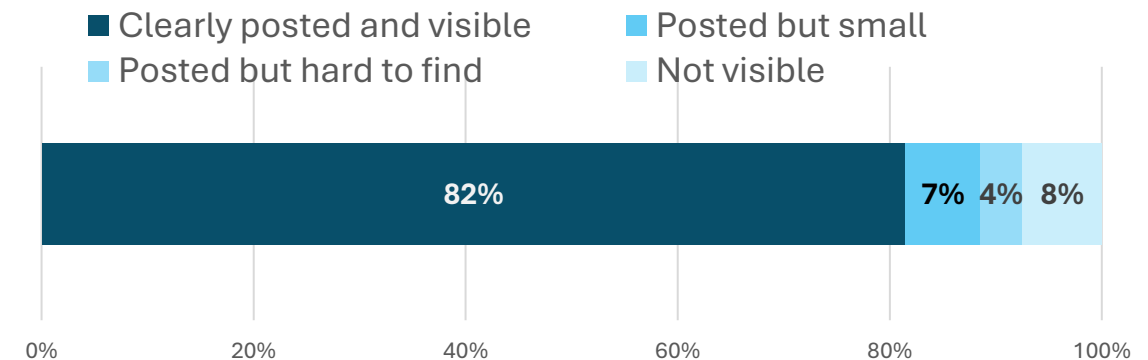
Single serving 7-OH
synthetic kratom
products



Single serving
THC beverages
for sale

FINDINGS: AGE OF SALE

- Age of sale signs intended to discourage underage sale and use
- Strong majority of retailers posted age of sale clearly
- Age of sale signs $\neq$ age verification “carding”



RECOMMENDATIONS: POLICY



- Advocate for comprehensive kratom and synthetic kratom bans throughout DuPage County.
- **Public Health & Coalitions:** Monitor ongoing Federal and local response to emerging and evolving products
 - Scheduling changes, Municipal bans, Proposed state legislation SB3160
- **Legislators & Advocates:** Restrict strategies that target youth and vulnerable populations: advertising, promotion, design and placement
 - Cartoon imagery, candy/snack mimicking
 - Flavored products
 - Placement near youth appealing items, cueing and impulse buy locations
 - Low-cost, single use, disposable

RECOMMENDATIONS: EDUCATION & TREATMENT



- Awareness building media campaign about the harms of kratom/synthetic kratom
- **Public Health Leaders, Coalitions & Schools:** Continue and expand high-quality, evidence-based prevention education and awareness building
 - More comprehensive inclusion of kratom products into education and awareness building
- **Treatment & Support Service Providers:** Offer robust evidence-based treatment and recovery services, ex: CBT, withdrawal mgmt., care coordination, supportive services
 - Acknowledge and respond to evolving context



THANK YOU!

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