

Synar and Block Grant: Working Together to Reduce Youth Access to Tobacco Products

What is the Synar Amendment?

Section 1926 of the Public Health Services Act (1992) was named for Oklahoma Congressman, Mike Synar, which aims to prevent and reduce tobacco use among young people. This federal law requires all states to conduct specific activities to reduce youth access to tobacco products, particularly in retail settings. It is administered through the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SAPTBG). NC DHHS, the Division of MHDDSAS (DMH) is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Synar Amendment.

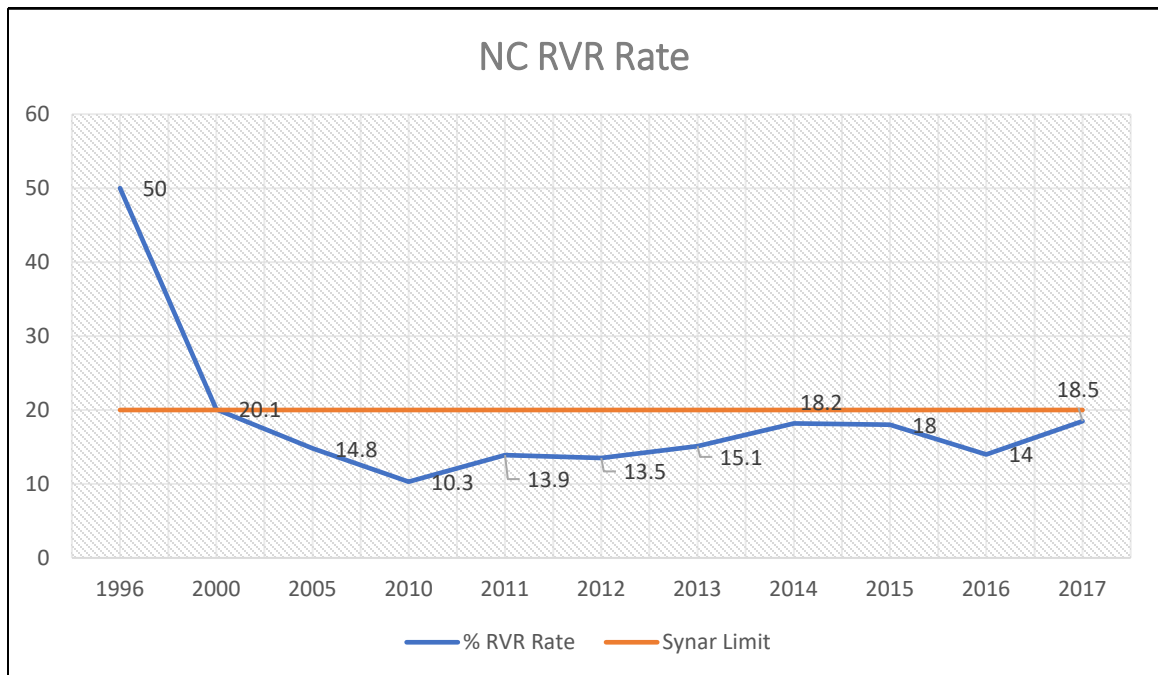
Immediate Concerns about Compliance with the Synar Amendment

Two major provisions of the Synar Law require NC to enforce its state youth tobacco access law (NCGS 14-313) and maintain a retailer violation rate (RVR) of 20% or less in its annual survey of retail tobacco outlets. NC's current RVR is nearly over the SAMHSA threshold.

What is the Penalty for Non-Compliance?

States that do not meet performance targets each year are subject to a 40% penalty (a loss of approximately \$16 million dollars in NC) of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block

Tobacco Sales to Minors in North Carolina



RVR rates have trended upward since 2012 due to: (1) elimination of funding for state tobacco education and enforcement, and (2) ALE no longer conducting tobacco compliance inspections.

Key Considerations

- SAPTBG funds CAN NOT be used for tobacco enforcement, yet enforcement is required and connected to the overall award.
- DMH has a contractual relationship with ALE to conduct Synar merchant education and retailer training.
- Effective 7/1/2018, ALE can conduct tobacco compliance checks and have reoccurring funding in the amount of \$300,000.
- Local prevention providers are encouraged to conduct evidence-based Synar activities.

Current Synar Requirements for Prevention Providers

Conduct a minimum of 8 hours per month per LME/MCO in one or more of the following areas:

- Community Education and Mobilization
- Merchant Education
- Law Enforcement
- Media and Public Relations

*Most time to date has been spent on community education and mobilization. We need to move beyond collaboration and information sharing to educating retailers and working to build relationships with law enforcement.