

# Recent Survey Shows Broad Support for Initiatives to Reduce Youth Access, Exposure to Tobacco

*News Release*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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[QuitDoc Research and Education Foundation](#) (QuitDoc) coordinated a statewide survey to study the attitudes of adult Floridians on tobacco issues that affect children. The survey was conducted because of a growing concern among parents that they are unable to completely protect their children from the risks of tobacco use. The survey assessed public support for policies that would help to reduce those risks.

The results of the February 2015 poll conducted by Republic Polling, a Delaware public opinion polling firm with offices in Florida, revealed strong support for new rules to protect children from secondhand smoke exposure in outdoor public places. A remarkable 72% of the respondents felt that local governments should have the right to prohibit smoking in public places wherever children may be present, such as parks and playgrounds. In addition, a substantial majority – 65% of respondents - believed that smoking should be prohibited in outdoor eating areas.

“Tobacco prevention groups have clearly done a good job educating Floridians on the risks of secondhand smoke,” said Dr. Kirk Voelker, a Pulmonologist and Co-Founder of QuitDoc. “77% of those surveyed believe that secondhand smoke is very harmful to children. However, nearly 4 out of every 10 middle school students still reported exposure to secondhand smoke in the 2014 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, including 19.0% that reported exposure to secondhand smoke in a public place. This public smoking makes it very hard for parents to completely protect their children.”

When asked about specific solutions to address this issue, an overwhelming 70% of those surveyed favored new rules to prohibit the use of tobacco products in state parks and beaches, with 54% strongly in favor of such a policy. Similarly, 69% of respondents favored new rules restoring the rights of local governments to pass their own rules regarding outdoor smoking in municipal parks, playgrounds, and beaches, with 50% strongly in favor.

Trying to protect children from secondhand smoke exposure in public has been made more complicated by The Florida Clean Indoor Air Act of 2003. “While the law was designed to create smoke-free indoor workplaces, the statute includes a clause regulating local communities that prevents them from taking any additional steps to reduce secondhand smoke exposure in outdoor venues” added Dr. Voelker. “Our survey results demonstrate that the citizens of Florida are very much in favor of removing that regulation.”

In addition to the research on secondhand smoke exposure, the survey collected data on youth access to tobacco products, including adult attitudes on the legal age to purchase tobacco and flavored tobacco products that are preferred by youth.

According to the 2014 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, 9.2% of high school students currently use any form of tobacco, and 8.8% of high school students currently use flavored tobacco. This means that nearly 96% of high school tobacco users are using flavored tobacco.

71% of the adults surveyed were in favor of new rules requiring that flavored tobacco products be sold only in tobacco specialty stores, including 57% who were strongly in favor of such a rule.

Similarly, 69% of the respondents also favored changing the legal age for tobacco purchases to 21, with 54% strongly in favor of such an increase.

“85% of new tobacco users start between the ages of 12 and 17, and flavored tobacco products are their drug of choice,” said Dr. Voelker. “Floridians seem to realize that increasing the legal age and limiting the sale of certain items to stores that restrict youth access will have a profound impact on youth tobacco use.”

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***Please share this information with other interested partners and stakeholders:***

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