

July 1, 2011

Dr. Lawrence Deyton, Director
Center for Tobacco Products
Food and Drug Administration
9200 Corporate Blvd. Rm 320W
Rockville, MD 20850

Also via electronic mail to TPSAC@fda.hhs.gov

Dear Members of the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee:

On behalf of the Tobacco Education Peer Health Educators from La Clinica de La Raza, Inc.; I am writing to support the FDA's examination of the use of menthol in cigarettes. The Peer Health Educators have been engaged in a community action project focused on menthol for more than a year and our work supports a ban on menthol in tobacco products. Regulating menthol is a positive way to support healthy youth and healthy communities.

The Peer Health Educators from La Clinica work in collaboration with a range of organizations within Alameda County, California lead by the Public Health Department, Division of Tobacco Control (ACPHD). Together we have succeeded in educating our communities about tobacco, assessing the communities' needs regarding tobacco control, recording the community opinion about the harms tobacco use inflicts on our communities, and passing local tobacco control policy. The resolutions passed by the Oakland City Council and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Alameda, in the state of California, in support of the FDA's regulation of menthol were submitted to the Committee at the February 10, 2011 meeting.

The Tobacco Peer Health Educators from La Clinica de La Raza (La Clinica) have worked on several community action projects; most recently focusing on Menthol. The youth peer educators elected to focus on Menthol, and its related issues such as deceptive health claims and advertising, after learning about the ways tobacco companies use menthol to target youth and people of color. They educated themselves with research available from Dr. Philip Gardiner, Tobacco Related Disease Researcher with the University of California, and then took this information to the community. More than 30 classroom presentations were conducted throughout high schools in the Oakland Unified School District, an educational mural was created and is now displayed on a school campus, and the educators documented the opinions and knowledge of mentholated products of both youth and adults in the community using surveys and informational interviews. The peer health educators were able to document numerous community concerns regarding the negative impact of tobacco use in our community. Selected results from these surveys and interviews are presented in the attached slides which were originally presented to the tobacco control coalition led by ACPHD mentioned above.

Menthol is used by tobacco companies to target youth and people of color. As youth of color who are educating and advocating for healthier communities, we support the FDA's efforts to regulate menthol.

Sincerely,

Yesenia Molinar
Health Educator
La Clinica de La Raza, Inc.

Enclosures

La Clinica de La Raza Tobacco Peer Health Education Program

Community Action Project 2011

A faint, semi-transparent image of two hands shaking is visible in the background, positioned below the main title and above the subtitle. The hands are rendered in a light teal color, matching the overall theme of the slide.

Our Inspiration

- After hearing Dr. Phillip Gardiner's presentation discussing the issue of menthol in communities of color, peer educators became inspired to tackle the issue of menthol.
- They decided to address their concerns about menthol being a nuisance and advertising messages displaying an image of menthol being a healthier substance with the FDA.

Why Focus on Menthol?

- What we know....
 - All tobacco products contain some menthol
 - 1.1 million underage adolescents smoke menthol cigarettes
 - Menthol helps the poison go down easier
 - 30% of all Americans smoke menthol
 - Youth use more flavored tobacco products than adults
 - Menthol cigarettes are starter products for youth especially in middle school

* Taken from Dr. Phillip Gardiner's presentation

Community Involvement

- Peer educators decided to survey different people in their local communities about their awareness and knowledge on menthol in tobacco products and the effects that tobacco has in their local communities.
- Peer educators surveyed residents in the Fruitvale area during the “Cinco de Mayo” festivities and during the Malcolm X Jazz Festival in San Antonio Park. At each event peer educators conducted 100 surveys; collecting 200 total.
- Additionally, peer educators surveyed 20 community members in the Fruitvale Shopping Center, gaining more experience in conducting outreach in the process.

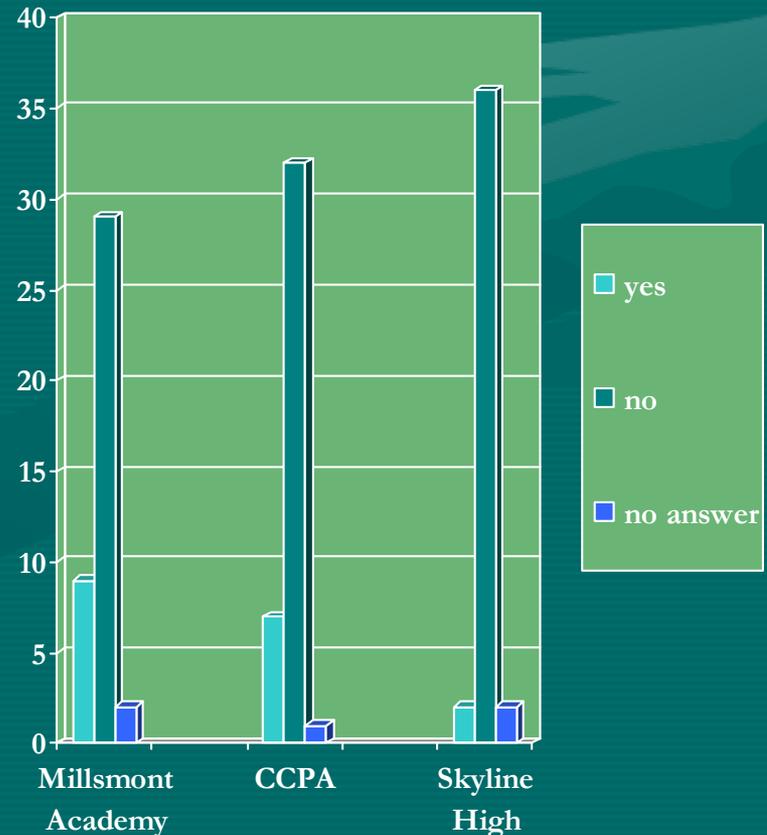
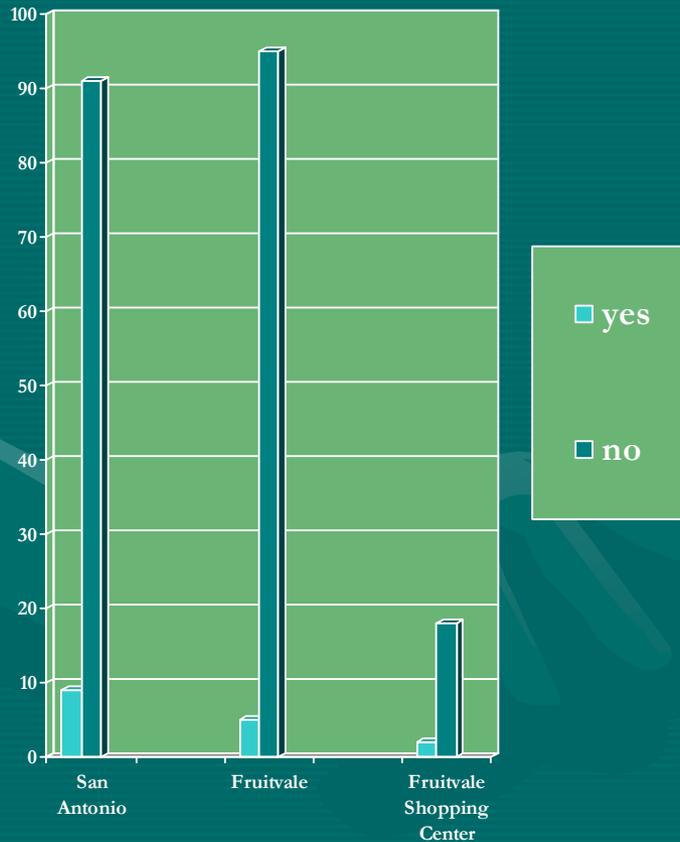
Youth Voice

- Peer educators expanded their outreach efforts to record the voice of the community by asking 120 students from various schools in Oakland Unified School District to respond on their views and perceptions on Menthol.
- 40 students from each of the following schools were surveyed:
 - 8th-grade students from Millsmont Academy on 82nd and Bancroft
 - 7th-grade Coliseum College Prep Academy (CCPA) students on Havenscourt campus
 - 9th-grade Skyline High students.

Do you think that menthol cigarettes are a safer tobacco product?

Community perspective

School Community perspective



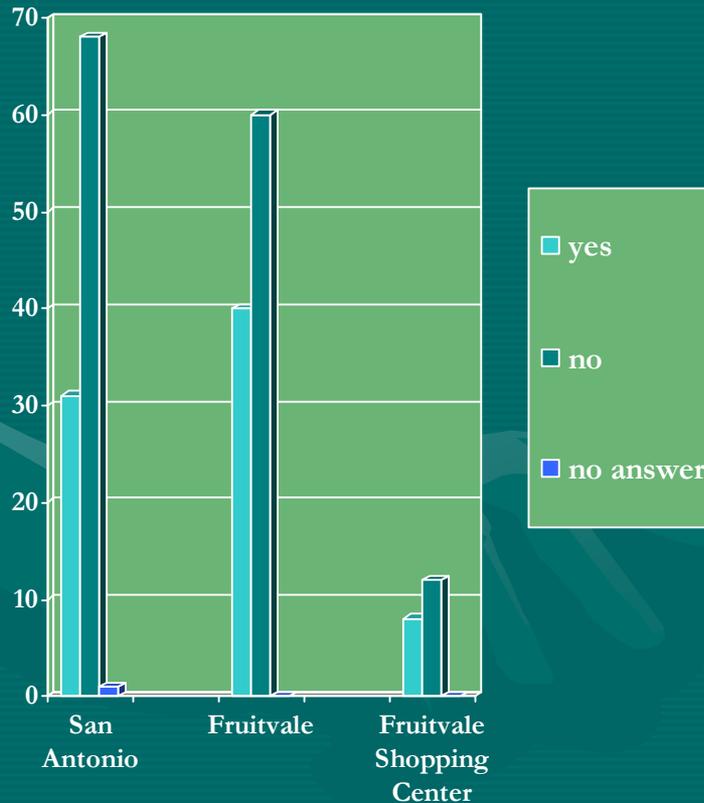
What issues do you see in your community that are caused by tobacco?

The Community & School community stated:

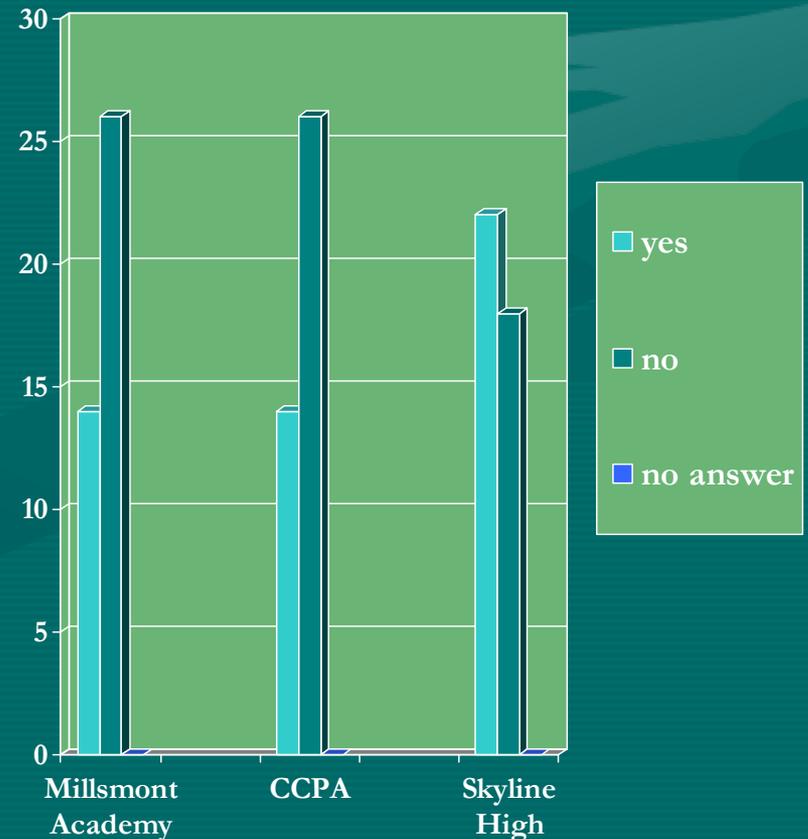
- Kids are affected by second & third-hand smoke
- Cancer
- Asthma
- Respiratory problems
- Littering
- Death
- Pollution
- Health problems
- Bad advertising
- Bad teeth
- Bad breath
- Bad image

Did you know that most tobacco products contain menthol?

Community perspective



School Community Perspective

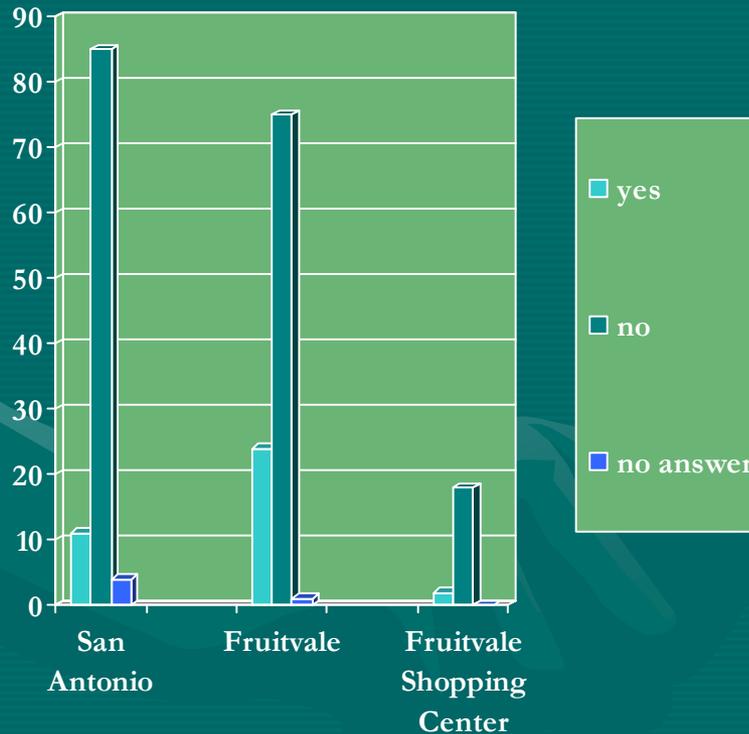


Which brand of tobacco products are most commonly seen in your community?

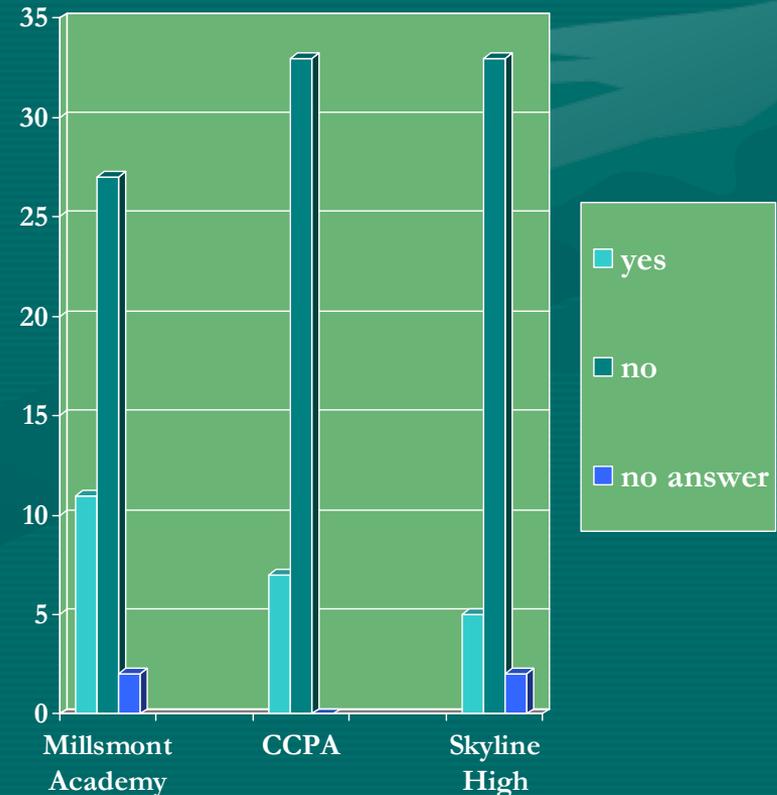
- Marlboro
- Newport
- Camel
- Cool
- Cigars
- Alas
- Virginia Slims

Do you think it is easy to quit using a tobacco product?

Community Perspective



School Community Perspective



Questions / Comments



Thanks

- Dr. Phillip Gardiner for providing peer educators with informative research & inspiration to be able to help support the cause for banning menthol flavoring in tobacco products