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Contact: Rachael Manning, 715-839-4718 or 715-271-1970 (cell)
Coalition Facilitator, Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention

Contact: Sergeant Brian Schneider, 715-839-4780
Eau Claire Police Department

Free Training Aims to Prevent Alcohol and Tobacco Sales to Youth

Eau Claire, WI – May 24, 2016 – Sellers and servers of alcohol and tobacco are the “first line of defense” in keeping underage people from getting their hands on these products. The Eau Claire City-County Health Department and the Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention will again partner with the Eau Claire Police Department to provide a free training for local alcohol and tobacco sellers. The next training will be on Wednesday, June 1st.

The main goal of the training is to improve public health and safety by giving sellers and servers information and tools to avoid making illegal sales. Topics covered in the training will include:

- Increasing awareness of the importance of responsible sales of alcohol and tobacco products
- The dangers of underage use of tobacco and alcohol
- The effect of underage use on our community
- Reading identification cards correctly
- How to spot a false identification card
- Tips on how to refuse an illegal sale

Underage use of alcohol and tobacco is a public health issue in Eau Claire County, where the average age of first use of both products is 13. This is concerning because 67% of youth who begin to drink alcohol before age 15 eventually do other drugs, and are 6 times more likely to have problems with alcohol addiction and abuse in the future. We also know that 80% of adults who are current tobacco users started before the age of 18. Sergeant Brian Schneider from the Eau Claire Police Department says, “We want to help retailers enhance these skills because we want businesses to be successful in not selling to minors. This helps keep young people and communities safe.”

Another goal of the training is to help retailers avoid hefty fines for illegal sales. Alcohol and tobacco compliance checks are conducted in collaboration with local law enforcement agencies. There are 104 tobacco licenses and 245 alcohol licenses held in Eau Claire County. In 2015, **10%** of tobacco retailers and **25%** of alcohol retailers sold to an underage person during these compliance checks.

Tobacco compliance checks are conducted through the Wisconsin *Wins* program, which is an evidence-based tobacco prevention program funded by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Wisconsin’s Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. Training, media & community outreach, and education are provided through the program. Free state required training on tobacco sale laws in Wisconsin is available at www.smokecheck.org.

For registration, training, and compliance check information visit the compliance check section of the Alliance website at www.getinvolvedasap.org. When kids have a hard time getting tobacco and alcohol, they use less. Preventing youth use will reduce negative health consequences and the cost to our community in the future.

