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**Contact:**

Rachael Manning, Health Educator  
715-839-5091  
Rachael.Manning@co.eau-claire.wi.us

**Re-Focus on Prevention During *National Prevention Week!***

**Eau Claire, WI, May 17, 2017** – It's National Prevention Week (NPW) and we are joining communities across the country in highlighting the important role that everyone has in helping people live healthier and more productive lives. This week is focused on increasing the prevention of substance use and promotion of positive mental health. This year the Health Department is highlighting tobacco prevention.



In Eau Claire County, more than 200 high-school-age youth reported using tobacco in the past month.. Each day in the United States, more than 3,200 youth aged 18 years or younger smoke their first cigarette. Youth are also more likely to try alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs for the first time during the summer months. On an average day in June or July, more than 5,000 youth will smoke cigarettes for the first time. One reason for the peak in youth use during the summer is because of more free time and less adult supervision.

One way we can keep kids from ever starting to experiment with cigarettes and other tobacco products is by keeping these products out of their hands. In Eau Claire County, nearly 30 percent of all middle school and high school youth say tobacco is easy to get. Retail employees play an important role in preventing youth tobacco use and making sure tobacco products are not being sold illegally to minors.



For the past decade, Smokecheck.org, through the WI Wins program has been the online destination for Wisconsin tobacco retailers looking for training to help them avoid illegal tobacco sales to youth. Now, the site has a new name, ***www.WITobaccoCheck.org***, and some new features.

In Wisconsin, tobacco retailer training is required for all employees who sell tobacco products. Training is available for free at the new site and employees can find study guides, take the online test and print the certificate when their training is done. Other new features include the ability to create a store account and monitor employee training progress.

“When retailers know the laws and have the skills and information they need, they are more prepared to avoid selling tobacco illegally to minors,” says Rachael Manning, Health Educator at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. “Restricting youth access to tobacco is important for preventing youth tobacco use.”

Retailers that don't sell tobacco products to youth are making a positive difference in Eau Claire County. WITobaccoCheck.org is a hassle-free way for tobacco retailers to re-focus on prevention and help kids stay tobacco free. For more information on how to register and activate a free store account, visit [www.WITobaccoCheck.org](http://www.WITobaccoCheck.org).

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