



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley

www.raysac.org



History of Virginia Tobacco Law

The social norms approach has been used effectively in the area of tobacco reduction. The term *social norms* refers to the majority approval and guidelines for acceptable behavior. Norms define what is normal, expected, and acceptable behavior in given situations, and are reinforced in a variety of ways: through images and messages in advertising, the media, the workplace, at home, and in the community. Repeated exposure to images and messages of a specific behavior makes the behavior seem more common. Below is the history of Virginia law that helped change the norms for tobacco use.

Year	Event
1986	Virginia's General Assembly passes law (COV 18.2-371.2) prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to anyone less than 16 years of age and the purchase or possession of tobacco products by anyone less than 16. Cigarette vending machines were excluded provided that a notice regarding the law was posted on the machines. The fine was set at \$25.
1991	The legal age for purchase and possession of tobacco products is changed from 16 to 18. The penalty for sale to a minor and for possession by a minor was changed to a \$50 fine. Tobacco retailers were required to post the legal age for tobacco sales and were subject to a \$50 fine for non-compliance.
1993	The penalty for illegal sale or possession remained at \$50 for a first violation but was increased to \$100 for subsequent violations.
1994	The phrase "distribute to" was added to clarify violations of the law. It is illegal to sell to, distribute to, or purchase for any person under 18.
1995	The penalties were increased for illegal sale of tobacco: a third or subsequent violation was punishable by a fine of up to \$250. A third or subsequent violation of underage purchase or possession remained at a \$100 fine. The amendment also added that cigarettes must be sold in packages sealed by the manufacturer with the required health warning on the label.
1996	A requirement was added to show proof of age with a driver's license or other government document to purchase cigarettes. Restrictions were placed on the operation and location of cigarette vending machines.
1997	ABC special agents were given authority to enforce tobacco laws and issue a summons for violations. Penalties for illegal sale were increased to \$100 for a first violation, \$200 for a second and \$500 for a third or subsequent violation. Penalties for underage purchase or possession remained the same.
1998	Legislation is passed that requires the Tax Commissioner to provide information on cigarette dealers to ABC. Agents will use the information to compile lists of retailers to aid in the enforcement of tobacco laws. ABC signs a contract with the Food and Drug Administration to conduct tobacco compliance checks in Virginia. Agents forward the results of underage buyer visits to the FDA, which can then issue warnings or impose penalties ranging from \$250 to \$10,000.
2000	The U.S. Supreme Court finds that the FDA lacks authority to enforce tobacco laws, and the contract with ABC is terminated. On July 1, ABC entered into a new contract with the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation to provide funding for tobacco compliance checks throughout the Commonwealth.
2001	The Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) begins granting funds to ABC for underage tobacco compliance checks through a substance abuse prevention and treatment block grant from the federal government.
2009	ABC renews its contracts with the Tobacco Settlement Foundation and DBHDS to continue conducting underage buyer tobacco compliance checks.

<http://www.abc.virginia.gov/facts/tobacco.html>

RAYSAC, in promoting a safe and drug free Roanoke Valley is addressing environmental issues that focus on changing individual behavior, and community norms about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD). These include addressing social norms, access and availability of ATOD, and changing policies. Obviously these strategies are effective; just review the timeline of the Virginia Tobacco Law.

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