States, Feds Restrict E-Cigarette Use Among Youth

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A new rule by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that bans the sale of e-cigarettes to anyone under 18 will go into effect Aug. 8. In most cities and states, however, selling e-cigs to anyone under 18 is already prohibited. In some cases, restrictions apply to those under 19 or 21.

On May 4, California Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill that prohibits the sale, and purchase, of tobacco products and electronic devices that deliver nicotine to anyone under 21. The law makes California the second state, after Hawaii, to change its smoking age to 21.

In June, Hawaii Gov. David Ige signed a bill that prohibited the sale, purchase, possession or consumption of cigarettes, other tobacco products and electronic smoking devices to anyone under the increased age. According to a press release, Ige said boosting the smoking age would help reduce tobacco use among youth.

According to Tobacco 21, a group that advocates the age boost, individuals under 21 are prohibited from buying cigarettes in more than 100 cities.

The FDA previously regulated cigarettes, cigarette tobacco, roll-your-own tobacco and smokeless tobacco, but the new rule extends the FDA’s authority to include electronic nicotine delivery systems, all cigars, hookah tobacco, pipe tobacco and nicotine gels, according to information on the FDA’s website.

Retailers will be required to verify age by photo ID in order to keep these tobacco products out of the hands of minors. In addition, the distribution of free samples will be prohibited. Tobacco products, including components and parts, may not be sold in vending machines unless the machines are located in adult-only facilities.

“We’ve agreed for many years that nicotine does not belong in the hands of children,” said Sylvia Mathews Burwell, the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, at a news conference, according to a story published May 5 in The New York Times. “Progress has been made, but the context has changed so we need to act.”

All manufacturers, importers and retailers of all regulated tobacco products must report ingredients to the FDA and place health warnings on product packages and advertisements.

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