

# **ANNUAL SYNAR REPORT**

**42 U.S.C. 300x-26**

OMB № 0930-0222

**FFY 2026**

**State: PR**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Annual Synar Report (ASR) format provides the means for states to comply with the reporting provisions of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300x-26) and the Tobacco Regulation for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG) (45 C.F.R. 96.130 (e)).

### **How the Synar report helps the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention**

In accordance with the tobacco regulations, states are required to provide detailed information on progress made in enforcing youth and young adult tobacco access laws (FFY 2025 Compliance Progress) and future plans to ensure compliance with the Synar requirements to reduce youth and young adult tobacco access rates (FFY 2026 Intended Use Plan). These data are required by 42 U.S.C. 300x-26 and will be used by the Secretary to evaluate state compliance with the statute. Part of the mission of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) is to assist states<sup>1</sup> by supporting Synar activities and providing technical assistance helpful in determining the type of enforcement measures and control strategies that are most effective. This information is helpful to CSAP in improving technical assistance resources and expertise on enforcement efforts and tobacco control program support activities, including state Synar program support services, through an enhanced technical assistance program involving conferences and workshops, development of training materials and guidance documents, and onsite technical assistance consultation.

### **How the Synar report can help states**

The information gathered for the Synar report can help states describe and analyze substate needs for program enhancements. These data can also be used to report to the state legislature and other state and local organizations on progress made to date in enforcing youth and young adult tobacco access laws when aggregated statistical data from state Synar reports can demonstrate to the Secretary the national progress in reducing youth and young adult tobacco access problems. This information will also provide Congress with a better understanding of state progress in implementing Synar, including state difficulties and successes in enforcing retailer compliance

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<sup>1</sup>The term “state” is used to refer to all the states and territories required to comply with Synar as part of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant Program requirements (42 U.S.C. 300x-64 and 45 C.F.R. 96.121).

with youth and young adult tobacco access laws.

### **Getting assistance in completing the Synar report**

If you have questions about programmatic issues, you may call CSAP's Division of Primary Prevention at (240) 276-2550 and ask for your respective State Project Officer or contact your State Project Officer directly by telephone or email. If you have questions about fiscal or grants management issues, you may call your Grants Management Specialist in the Office of Financial Resources, Division of Grants Management, at (240) 276-1422.

### **Where and when to submit the Synar report**

The ASR must be received by SAMHSA no later than December 31, 2025, and must be submitted in the format specified by these instructions. Use of the approved format will avoid delays in the review and approval process. The chief executive officer (or an authorized designee) of the applicant organization must sign page one of the ASR certifying that the state has complied with all reporting requirements.

The state must upload one copy of the ASR using the online WebBGAS (Block Grant Application System). In addition, the following items must be uploaded to WebBGAS:

- FFY 2026 Synar Survey Results: States that use the Synar Survey Estimation System (SSES) must upload one copy of *SSES Tables 1–8* (in Excel) to WebBGAS. **Please note that, in the FFY 2026 ASR, SSES will generate Tables 6, 7, and 8, which are based on the optional microdata on product type, retail outlet type, and whether identification was requested. If your state does not submit these optional data, Tables 6, 7, and 8 will be blank. Tables 6, 7, and 8 are generated for the convenience of the state, and states are not required to submit completed versions of Tables 6, 7, or 8.** States that do not use SSES must upload one copy of ASR Forms 1, 4, and 5, and Forms 2 and 3, if applicable, (in Excel), as well as a database with the raw inspection data to WebBGAS.
- Synar Inspection Form: States must upload one blank copy of the inspection form used to record the result of each Synar inspection.
- Synar Inspection Protocol: States must upload a copy of the protocol used to train inspection teams on conducting and reporting the results of the Synar inspections. This document should be different than the Appendix C attached to the Annual Synar Report.
- A scanned copy of the signed Funding Agreements/Certifications

Each state SSA Director has been emailed a login ID and password to log onto the Synar section of the WebBGAS site.

## FFY 2026: FUNDING AGREEMENTS/CERTIFICATIONS

The following form must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer or an authorized designee and submitted with this application. Documentation authorizing a designee must be attached to the application.

### PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES ACT AND SYNAR AMENDMENT

42 U.S.C. 300x-26 requires each state to submit an annual report of its progress in meeting the requirements of the Synar Amendment and its implementing regulation (45 C.F.R. 96.130) to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. By signing below, the chief executive officer (or an authorized designee) of the applicant organization certifies that the state has complied with these reporting requirements and the certifications as set forth below.

### SYNAR SURVEY SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

The state certifies that the Synar survey sampling methodology on file with the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and submitted with the Annual Synar Report for FFY 2026 is up-to-date and approved by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

### SYNAR SURVEY INSPECTION PROTOCOL

The state certifies that the Synar Survey Inspection Protocol on file with the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and submitted with the Annual Synar Report for FFY 2026 is up-to-date and approved by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

**State:** PR

**Name of Chief Executive Officer or Designee:** Catherine Oliver Franco, MSW, PhD

**Signature of CEO or Designee:**



**Title:** Administrator

**Date Signed:** 15 dic 2025

**If signed by a designee, a copy of the designation must be attached.**

**SECTION I: FFY 2025 (Compliance Progress)****YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT ACCESS LAWS, ACTIVITIES, AND ENFORCEMENT**

42 U.S.C. 300x-26 requires the states to report information regarding the sale/distribution of tobacco products to individuals under age 21.

**1. Please indicate any changes or additions to the state tobacco statute(s) relating to youth and young adult access since the last reporting year. If any changes were made to the state law(s) since the last reporting year, please upload a copy of the state law to WebBGAS. (see 42 U.S.C. 300x-26).**

**a. Has there been a change in the minimum sale age for tobacco products?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

*If Yes, current minimum age:* ☐ 19 ☐ 20 ☐ 21

**b. Have there been any changes in state law that impact the state's protocol for conducting Synar inspections?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

*If Yes, indicate change. (Check all that apply.)*

☐ Changed to require that law enforcement conduct inspections of tobacco outlets  
☐ Changed to make it illegal for youth and young adults to possess, purchase or receive tobacco

☐ Changed to require ID to purchase tobacco

☐ Changed definition of tobacco products

☐ Other change(s) (Please describe.) \_\_\_\_\_

**c. Have there been any changes in state law that impact the following?**

Licensing of tobacco vendors ☐ Yes ☒ No

Penalties for sales to minors ☐ Yes ☒ No

Vending machines ☐ Yes ☒ No

Added product

categories to youth and young adult access law ☐ Yes ☒ No

**2. Describe how the Annual Synar Report (see 45 C.F.R. 96.130(e)) was made public within the state prior to submission of the ASR. (Check all that apply.)**

☐ Placed on file for public review

☒ Posted on a state agency Web site (Please provide exact Web address and the date when the FFY 2026 ASR was posted to this Web address.)

Web address: www.assmca.pr.gov

Date published: December 22, 2025

☐ Notice published in a newspaper or newsletter

- ☐ Public hearing
- ☐ Announced in a news release, a press conference, or discussed in a media interview
- ☐ Distributed for review as part of the SABG application process
- ☐ Distributed through the public library system
- ☐ Published in an annual register
- ☐ Other (Please describe.) \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Identify the following agency or agencies (see 42 U.S.C. 300x-26 and 45 C.F.R. 96.130).**

**a. The state agency(ies) designated by the Governor for oversight of the Synar requirements:**

Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services Administration

Has this changed since last year's Annual Synar Report?

☐ Yes ☒ No

**b. The state agency(ies) responsible for conducting random, unannounced Synar inspections:**

Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services Administration

Has this changed since last year's Annual Synar Report?

☐ Yes ☒ No

**c. The state agency(ies) responsible for enforcing youth and young adult tobacco access law(s):**

Puerto Rico Treasury Department, Puerto Rico Police, and Consumers Affairs Department

Has this changed since last year's Annual Synar Report?

☐ Yes ☒ No

**4. Identify the following agencies and describe their relationship with the agency responsible for the oversight of the Synar requirements.**

**a. Identify the state agency responsible for tobacco prevention activities (the agency that receives the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Tobacco Control Program funding).**

Puerto Rico Department of Health

**b. Has the responsible agency changed since last year's Annual Synar Report?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

**c. Describe the coordination and collaboration that occur between the agency responsible for tobacco prevention and the agency responsible for oversight of the Synar requirements. (Check all that apply.) The two agencies**

- ☐ Are the same
- ☐ Have a formal written memorandum of agreement
- ☒ Have an informal partnership
- ☐ Conduct joint planning activities
- ☐ Combine resources
- ☒ Have other collaborative arrangement(s) *(Please describe.)* The Department of Health is part of the Tobacco Prevention Advisory Committee lead by MHAASA
- ☐ No relationship

**d. Does a state agency contract with the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products (FDA/CTP) to enforce the youth and young adult access and advertising restrictions in the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act?**

- ☐ Yes ☒ No (if no, go to Question 5)

**e. If yes, identify the state agency responsible for enforcing the youth and young adult access and advertising restrictions in the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (the agency that is under contract to the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products (FDA/CTP)).**

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**f. Has the responsible agency changed since last year's Annual Synar Report?**

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

**g. Describe the coordination and collaboration that occur between the agency contracted with the FDA to enforce federal youth and young adult tobacco access laws and the agency responsible for oversight of the Synar requirements. (Check all that apply.) The two agencies:**

- ☐ Are the same
- ☐ Have a formal written memorandum of agreement
- ☐ Have an informal partnership
- ☐ Conduct joint planning activities
- ☐ Combine resources
- ☐ Have other collaborative arrangement(s) *(Please describe.)* \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No relationship

**h. Does the state use data from the FDA enforcement inspections for Synar survey reporting?**

- ☐ Yes ☐ No



5. Please answer the following questions regarding the state's activities to enforce the state's youth and young adult access to tobacco law(s) in FFY 2025 (see 42 U.S.C. 300x-26 and 45 C.F.R. 96.130(e)).

a. Which one of the following describes the enforcement of state youth and young adult access to tobacco laws carried out in your state? (Check one category only.)

- ☐ Enforcement is conducted exclusively by local law enforcement agencies.
- ☒ Enforcement is conducted exclusively by state agency(ies).
- ☐ Enforcement is conducted by both local *and* state agencies.

b. The following items concern penalties imposed for all violations of state youth and young adult access to tobacco laws by **LOCAL AND/OR STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES** (this does not include enforcement of local laws or federal youth and young adult tobacco access laws). Please fill in the number requested. If state law does not allow for an item, please mark "NA" (not applicable). If a response for an item is unknown, please mark "UNK." The chart must be filled in completely.

PENALTY	OWNERS	CLERKS	TOTAL
Number of <u>citations issued</u>	0	0	
Number of <u>fines assessed</u>	0	0	0
Number of <u>permits/licenses suspended</u>	0		0
Number of <u>permits/licenses revoked</u>	0		0
Other (Please describe.) <i>Warnings were issued to outlets found in violation during the Synar Study. Additionally, clerks received orientation on the law from MHAASA and the Puerto Rico Treasury Department.</i>	59	0	59

c. Are citations or warnings issued to retailers or clerks who sell tobacco to minors for inspections that are part of the Synar survey?

- ☒ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes" to 5c, please describe the state's procedure for minimizing risk of bias to the survey results from retailers alerting each other to the presence of the survey teams:

To minimize the risk of bias, the team divided into smaller groups and conducted inspections simultaneously. Throughout the inspection period, members maintained constant communication. If any team issued a citation, all other teams were immediately notified. Additionally, if youth inspectors entered an outlet and realized they had prior knowledge of the inspection, they were required to leave and postpone the visit to an unannounced, later date.

**d. Which one of the following best describes the level of enforcement of state youth and young adult access to tobacco laws carried out in your state? (Check one category only.)**

- ☒ Enforcement is conducted only at those outlets randomly selected for the Synar survey.
- ☐ Enforcement is conducted only at a subset of outlets not randomly selected for the Synar survey.
- ☐ Enforcement is conducted at a combination of outlets randomly selected for the Synar survey and outlets not randomly selected for the Synar survey.

**e. Did every tobacco outlet in the state receive at least one compliance check that included enforcement of the state youth and young adult tobacco access law(s) in the last year?**

- ☐ Yes ☒ No

**f. What additional activities are conducted in your state to support enforcement and compliance with state youth and young adult tobacco access law(s)? (Check all that apply and briefly describe each activity in the text boxes below each activity.)**

- ☒ Merchant education and/or training

MHAASA's Regional Prevention Staff conducted visits to **5,262** outlets and licensed retailers to provide orientation on legislation prohibiting the sale, donation, and distribution of tobacco products, including cigarettes and e-cigarettes, to individuals under 21 years of age (Law 45-2021, Law 45-2015). Retailers were educated on the importance of requesting IDs from anyone appearing under 27 and informed of the legal implications of non-compliance.

**Posters and Stickers Distributed:** A total of **3,972 retailers** received updated posters and stickers highlighting current legislation. Establishments with multiple cashier stations, such as supermarkets and gas stations, were given additional materials.

**Proximity Restrictions Reminders:** Retailers were reminded to comply with **Law 62-1993**, which prohibits the advertisement and promotion of tobacco products within 500 feet of schools and daycare facilities.

- ☐ Incentives for merchants who comply (e.g., non-enforcement compliance checks in which compliant retailers are given positive reinforcement and non-compliant retailers are warned about youth and young adult access laws)

- ☒ Community education regarding youth and young adult access laws

**Radio Programs:**

The MHAASA Administrator for Prevention took part in seven radio programs to explain the initiative that educates retailers on the importance of requesting ID from anyone who appears to be under 30, as well as informing them about the legal consequences of non-compliance.

Radio Stations:

- WKAQ 580 AM
- Radio Isla 1320
- Radio Universidad
- Radio Dimension
- WIPR Radio
- Viva 95 Radio PR

**TV Programs:**

- Channel (WAPA SPORTS)

**Alternative Strategies:**

This year's report highlights various educational outreach initiatives focused on preventing the use of tobacco and other drugs, as well as raising awareness about related health risks. These activities were carried out during events such as Bad Bunny's concert residency and summer beach campaigns, aiming to educate the public about the dangers of substance use and the importance of prevention efforts.

**Concert Residency Initiatives:** During the concert residency of artist Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, 'Bad Bunny,' at the *Coliseo de Puerto Rico*, prevention personnel provided attendees with education on the risks associated with alcohol, tobacco, and other illicit drugs. The Prevention team engaged visitors at the information table, offering guidance on the proper use and importance of fentanyl test strips (FTS) and sharing resources related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD). In total, 30 outreach activities were carried out during this period.

**Summer Campaign Impact:** The campaign "*With Illicit Fentanyl, You Risk Everything*" resulted in the distribution of 248 Narcan kits across five beaches, underscoring ongoing efforts to combat opioid overdoses during the summer months. This activity integrated tobacco prevention efforts.

**Theatrical Outreach and Engagement:** The play *La Cancha* was performed in various municipalities to educate youth and families about drug and tobacco prevention, addressing topics such as peer pressure and mental health. This initiative reached a total of 831 students across five presentations in several municipalities (San Juan, Fajardo, Guaynabo, Barceloneta, and Florida)

**Report on the Impact of Educational Outreach by the Prevention Educational Component on Opioid Overdose Prevention and Narcan Distribution**

Impact Report of Prevention Staff during the "Summer Bash" 2025

Prevention Campaign: "With Illicit Fentanyl, You Risk Everything"

In collaboration with KQ 105, the campaign was conducted at various beaches during the summer to raise awareness about the dangers of illicit fentanyl and promote overdose prevention. The activity also integrated tobacco prevention efforts.

A total of 248 Narcan kits were distributed.

Total Activities: 5

- Saturday, May 24, 2025 – *Balneario de Cabo Rojo*
- Sunday, June 8, 2025 – *Playa de Puerto Nuevo*
- Sunday, June 22, 2025 – Seven Seas, Fajardo
- Sunday, July 6, 2025 – *Balneario de Carolina*
- Sunday, August 3, 2025 – *Balneario de Punta Salinas, Toa Baja*

### **Special Initiatives and Media Outreach:**

#### **1. Collaborative Planning**

The agency developed multiple strategies and established dedicated work teams to support tobacco and substance use prevention efforts. These teams included staff from complementary programs such as Turn Off Vape and the Prevention Centers in Moca and Mayagüez, strengthening coordination and expanding the reach of prevention activities.

#### **2. Media Engagement During the Justas**

As part of broader outreach efforts, the agency coordinated a series of media appearances during the *Justas Atléticas Interuniversitarias*, Puerto Rico's largest annual collegiate sporting event, which draws thousands of students, families, and community members. Three televised interviews were recorded at *WAPA Televisión* in Guaynabo to promote public awareness about tobacco and substance use prevention, highlight ongoing initiatives, and reinforce the importance of community engagement in reducing youth access to harmful substances.

#### **3. School and Workshop Initiatives:**

**-Private Schools:** MHAASA staff conducted orientations on tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and drug prevention for **4,143 participants** across **77 private schools**.

**-Public Schools:** Under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education, staff provided workshops on:

E-cigarettes and vaping: 39,691 participants.

Tobacco-related harms: 31,807 participants.

**-Elementary Schools:**

Staff conducted **153 creative tobacco workshops**, reaching **4,602 students**.

**- “Turn Off Vape” Project:**

Funded by the JUUL lawsuit, MHAASA delivered **1,753 workshops** to **48,610 participants**, emphasizing the dangers of vaping and promoting healthier choices.

☐ Media use to publicize compliance inspection results

☐ Community mobilization to increase support for retailer compliance with youth and young adult access laws

☒ Other activities *(Please list.)* Tobacco Prevention Advisory Committee

MHAASA continues to lead the Tobacco Prevention Advisory Committee (CAPT, by its Spanish acronym) in collaboration with Nexos Group, Inc. The CAPT was established to provide guidance and recommendations for the planning, development, and implementation of public policy. Its members include:

- Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services Administration
- Puerto Rico Health Department
- Puerto Rico Treasury Department
- Department of Public Safety
- Consumer Affairs Department
- Department of Justice
- Puerto Rico Department of the Family
- Permit Management Office
- Community Member

The CAPT met regularly throughout the year and was able to convene virtually through an online platform. MHAASA will continue to maintain the Tobacco Prevention Advisory Committee (CAPT). This year, the CAPT met twice, from June to September 2025.

## SYNAR SURVEY METHODS AND RESULTS

The following questions pertain to the survey methodology and results of the Synar survey used by the state to meet the requirements of the Synar Regulation in FFY 2025 (see 42 U.S.C. 300x-26 and 45 C.F.R. 96.130).

**6. Has the sampling methodology changed from the previous year?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

*The state is required to have an approved up-to-date description of the Synar sampling methodology on file with CSAP. Please submit a copy of your Synar Survey Sampling Methodology (Appendix B). If the sampling methodology changed from the previous reporting year, these changes must be reflected in the methodology submitted.*

**a. If yes, describe how and when this change was communicated to SAMHSA**

**7. Please answer the following questions regarding the state's annual random, unannounced inspections of tobacco outlets (see 45 C.F.R. 96.130(d)(2)).**

**a. Did the state use the optional Synar Survey Estimation System (SSES) to analyze the Synar survey data?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, upload a copy of SSES tables 1–8 (in Excel) to WebBGAS. Then go to Question 8. If No, continue to Question 7b.*

**b. Report the weighted and unweighted Retailer Violation Rate (RVR) estimates, the standard error, accuracy rate (number of eligible outlets divided by the total number of sampled outlets), and completion rate (number of eligible outlets inspected divided by the total number of eligible outlets).**

Unweighted RVR

Weighted RVR

Standard error (s.e.) of the (weighted) RVR

Fill in the blanks to calculate the right limit of the right-sided 95% confidence interval.

	+	(1.645	×		)	=	
RVR Estimate	plus	(1.645	times	Standard Error )	equals	Right Limit	

Accuracy rate

Completion rate

c. **Fill out Form 1 in Appendix A (Forms 1–5).** *(Required regardless of the sample design.)*

d. **How were the (weighted) RVR estimate and its standard error obtained?**  
*(Check the one that applies.)*

☐ Form 2 (Optional) in Appendix A (Forms 1–5) *(Attach completed Form 2.)*

☐ Other *(Please specify. Provide formulas and calculations or attach and explain the program code and output with description of all variable names.)*

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e. **If stratification was used, did any strata in the sample contain only one outlet or cluster this year?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No stratification

*If Yes, explain how this situation was dealt with in variance estimation.*

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f. **Was a cluster sample design used?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, fill out and attach Form 3 in Appendix A (Forms 1–5), and answer the following question.*

*If No, go to Question 7g.*

**Were any certainty primary sampling units selected this year?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, explain how the certainty clusters were dealt with in variance estimation.*

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g. **Report the following outlet sample sizes for the Synar survey.**

	Sample Size
<b>Effective sample size</b> (sample size needed to meet the SAMHSA precision requirement assuming simple random sampling)	
<b>Target sample size</b> (the product of the effective sample size and the design effect)	
<b>Original sample size</b> (inflated sample size of the target sample to counter the sample attrition due to ineligibility and noncompletion)	
<b>Eligible sample size</b> (number of outlets found to be eligible in the sample)	
<b>Final sample size</b> (number of eligible outlets in the sample for which an inspection was completed)	

h. **Fill out Form 4 in Appendix A (Forms 1–5).**

**8. Did the state's Synar survey use a list frame?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, answer the following questions about its coverage.*

**a. The calendar year of the latest Sampling frame coverage study: 2022**

**b. Percent coverage from the latest Sampling frame coverage study: 88.8%**

**c. Was a new study conducted in this reporting period?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, please complete Appendix D (List Sampling Frame Coverage Study) and submit it with the Annual Synar Report.*

**d. The calendar year of the next coverage study planned: 2028**

**9. Has the Synar survey inspection protocol changed from the previous year?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*The state is required to have an approved up-to-date description of the Synar inspection protocol on file with CSAP. Please submit a copy of your Synar Survey Inspection Protocol (Appendix C). If the inspection protocol changed from the previous year, these changes must be reflected in the protocol submitted.*

**a. If Yes, describe how and when this change was communicated to SAMHSA**

On May 5, 2025, the revised Synar Inspection Protocol was transmitted via email to Ms. Heather McDonnell-Stalnaker, State Project Officer, CSAP.

**b. Provide the inspection period: From 08/07/2025 to 09/27/2025**  
MM/DD/YY MM/DD/YY

**c. Provide the number of youth and young adult inspectors used in the current inspection year:**

11

NOTE: If the state uses SSES, please ensure that the number reported in 9b matches that reported in SSES Table 4, or explain any difference.

**d. Fill out and attach Form 5 in Appendix A (Forms 1–5). (Not required if the state used SSES to analyze the Synar survey data.)**



## SECTION II: FFY 2026 (Intended Use):

Public Law 42 U.S.C. 300x-26 of the Public Health Service Act and 45 C.F.R. 96.130 (e) (4, 5) require that the states provide information on future plans to ensure compliance with the Synar requirements to reduce youth and young adult tobacco access.

### 1. In the upcoming year, does the state anticipate any changes in:

Synar sampling methodology ☐ Yes ☒ No

Synar inspection protocol ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If changes are made in either the Synar sampling methodology or the Synar inspection protocol, the state is required to obtain approval from CSAP prior to implementation of the change and file an updated Synar Survey Sampling Methodology (Appendix B) or an updated Synar Survey Inspection Protocol (Appendix C), as appropriate.*

### 2. Please describe the state's plans to maintain and/or reduce the target rate for Synar inspections to be completed in FFY 2026. Include a brief description of plans for law enforcement efforts to enforce youth and young adult tobacco access laws, activities that support law enforcement efforts to enforce youth and young adult tobacco access laws, and any anticipated changes in youth and young adult tobacco access legislation or regulation in the state.

MHAASA will continue to maintain the Tobacco Prevention Advisor Committee (CAPT). This year, the CAPT met from June to September 2025. This year, the committee updated the work plan (objectives and strategies) and discussed tobacco-related bills. MHAASA will support public policy efforts to reduce the accessibility of e-cigarettes and vapers.

For 2025–2026, the agency will implement a series of educational campaigns and outreach activities aimed at preventing tobacco use and raising awareness of the risks associated with nicotine and vaping.

Key initiatives include:

-Psychological Impact and Nicotine Addiction: Educating youth about how vaping can lead to nicotine dependence and negatively affect brain development, mood, and concentration.

-Parental Engagement – “Do You Know if Your Child Vapes?”: Encouraging parents to have conversations with their children about vaping, highlighting that many high school students use e-cigarettes, which are not FDA-approved for smoking cessation.

-Awareness Campaign – “Don’t Let Your Life Go Up in Smoke”: Highlighting the long-term damage vaping can cause to the lungs, brain, and cardiovascular system.

-Media Messaging – “Listen with Awareness”: Promoting informed decision-making among youth and encouraging resistance to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs through music and entertainment channels.

MHAASA will revisit Bill 241 with the Senate to advance legislation specifically addressing the sale and **attempts** to sell tobacco products to minors. The bill establishes \$10,000 fines and 12-month license suspensions for anyone who sells or attempts to sell cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, or other tobacco products to individuals under 21, and penalizes those who

assist or encourage minors in obtaining these products. These measures aim to strengthen compliance, deter illegal sales, and reduce youth access to tobacco throughout Puerto Rico.

**3. Describe any challenges the state faces in complying with the Synar regulation. (Check all that apply and describe each challenge in the text box below it.)**

- ☒ Limited resources for law enforcement of youth and young adult access laws

Enforcement agencies continue to face shortages of inspection agents due to the retirement of many staff members. The current economic situation of government agencies further limits their ability to recruit new Internal Revenue Agents.

- ☒ Limited resources for activities to support enforcement and compliance with youth and young adult tobacco access laws

The ongoing economic crisis on the island constrains the resources allocated for enforcement activities.

- ☐ Limitations in the state youth and young adult tobacco access laws

- ☐ Limited public support for enforcement of youth and young adult tobacco access laws

- ☒ Limitations on completeness/accuracy of list of tobacco outlets

The data collection period was implemented from August to September, rather than the originally planned July–September window, due to challenges in recruiting youth inspectors and delays in executing contractual agreements. During this period, many youth inspectors had begun their college studies, and field inspections were scheduled based on their limited availability. Consequently, some outlets may have been closed, temporarily inaccessible, or operating under modified business hours at the time of attempted visits, potentially affecting coverage. For future study cycles, recruitment and contracting processes will be initiated earlier, and store hours and accessibility will be verified in advance to minimize time-related operational constraints.

- ☐ Limited expertise in survey methodology

- ☐ Laws/regulations limiting the use of minors in tobacco inspections

- ☒ Difficulties recruiting youth and young adult inspectors

MHAASA continues to experience difficulties recruiting youth who appear underage. In addition, some declined to participate after learning the nature of the study and the activities involved, as they considered it to be high-risk.

- ☐ Issues regarding the balance of inspections conducted by youth inspectors age 15 and under

- ☒ Issues regarding the balance of inspections conducted by one gender of youth and young adult inspectors

The recruitment of youth inspectors proved challenging, as some candidates declined to participate. Ultimately, eight females and three males were selected.

- ☐ Geographic, demographic, and logistical considerations in conducting inspections

- ☐ Cultural factors (e.g., language barriers, young people purchasing for their elders)

- ☐ Issues regarding sources of tobacco under tribal jurisdiction

- ☒ Other challenges (*Please list.*) Safety concerns

Safety concerns persist for both staff and youth when outlets are located in high-crime areas and remain open after 8:00 p.m. Ongoing instability in Puerto Rico—such as the fiscal crisis and high unemployment—continues to influence tobacco sales. Many businesses are feeling the effects of the weakened economy and, as a result, may be more willing to sell to minors to increase profit margins. MHAASA plans to continue its efforts and maintain strong awareness of this issue among law enforcement, retailers, and the broader community.

## APPENDIX A: FORMS 1–5

### FORM 1 (Required for all states not using the Synar Survey Estimation System (SSES) to analyze the Synar Survey data)

Complete Form 1 to report sampling frame and sample information and to calculate the unweighted retailer violation rate (RVR) using results from the current year’s Synar survey inspections.

**Instructions for Completing Form 1:** In the top right-hand corner of the form, provide the state name and reporting federal fiscal year (FFY 2026). Provide the remaining information by stratum if stratification was used. Make copies of the form if additional rows are needed to list all the strata.

Column 1: *If stratification was used:*

1(a) Sequentially number each row.

1(b) Write in the name of each stratum. All strata in the state must be listed.

*If no stratification was used:*

1(a) Leave blank.

1(b) Write “state” in the first row (indicates that the whole state is a single stratum).

*Note for unstratified samples: For Columns 2–5, wherever the instruction refers to “each stratum,” report the specified information for the state as a whole.*

Column 2: 2(a) Report the number of over-the-counter (OTC) outlets in the sampling frame in each stratum.  
2(b) Report the number of vending machine (VM) outlets in the sampling frame in each stratum.  
2(c) Report the combined total of OTC and VM outlets in the sampling frame in each stratum.

Column 3: 3(a) Report the estimated number of eligible OTC outlets in the OTC outlet population in each stratum.  
3(b) Report the estimated number of eligible VM outlets in the VM outlet population in each stratum.  
3(c) Report the combined total estimated number of eligible OTC and VM outlets in the total outlet population in each stratum.

*The estimates for Column 3 can be obtained from the Synar survey sample as the weighted sum of eligible outlets by outlet type.*

Column 4: 4(a) Report the number of eligible OTC outlets for which an inspection was completed, for each stratum.  
4(b) Report the numbers of eligible VM outlets for which an inspection was completed, for each stratum.  
4(c) Report the combined total of eligible OTC and VM outlets for which an inspection was completed, for each stratum.

Column 5: 5(a) Report the number of OTC outlets found in violation of the law as a result of completed inspections, for each stratum.  
5(b) Report the number of VM outlets found in violation of the law as a result of completed inspections, for each stratum.  
5(c) Report the combined total of OTC and VM outlets found in violation of the law as a result of completed inspections, for each stratum.

Totals: For each subcolumn (a–c) in Columns 2–5, provide totals for the state as a whole in the last row of the table. These numbers will be the sum of the numbers in each row for the respective column.

**FORM 1 (Required for all states not using the Synar Survey Estimation System [SSES] to analyze the Synar Survey data.)**

[illegible]

**RECORD COLUMN TOTALS ON LAST LINE (LAST PAGE ONLY IF MULTIPLE PAGES ARE NEEDED).**

**FORM 2 (Optional)****Appropriate for stratified simple or systematic random sampling designs.**

Complete Form 2 to calculate the weighted RVR. This table (in Excel form) is designed to calculate the weighted RVR for stratified simple or systematic random sampling designs, accounting for ineligible outlets and noncomplete inspections encountered during the annual Synar survey.

**Instructions for Completing Form 2:** In the top right-hand corner of the form, provide the state name and reporting federal fiscal year (FFY 2026).

- Column 1: Write in the name of each stratum into which the sample was divided. These should match the strata reported in Column 1(b) of Form 1.
- Column 2: Report the number of outlets in the sampling frame in each stratum. These numbers should match the numbers reported for the respective strata in Column 2(c) of Form 1.
- Column 3: Report the original sample size (the number of outlets originally selected, *including* substitutes or replacements) for each stratum.
- Column 4: Report the number of sample outlets in each stratum that were found to be eligible during the inspections. Note that this number must be less than or equal to the number reported in Column 3 for the respective strata.
- Column 5: Report the number of eligible outlets in each stratum for which an inspection was completed. Note that this number must be less than or equal to the number reported in Column 4. These numbers should match the numbers reported in Column 4(c) of Form 1 for the respective strata.
- Column 6: Report the number of eligible outlets inspected in each stratum that were found in violation. These numbers should match the numbers reported in Column 5(c) of Form 1 for the stratum.
- Column 7: Form 2 (in Excel form) will automatically calculate the stratum RVR for each stratum in this column. This is calculated by dividing the number of inspected eligible outlets found in violation (Column 6) by the number of inspected eligible outlets (Column 5). The state unweighted RVR will be shown in the Total row of Column 7.
- Column 8: Form 2 (in Excel form) will automatically calculate the estimated number of eligible outlets in the population for each stratum. This calculation is made by multiplying the number of outlets in the sampling frame (Column 2) times the number of eligible outlets (Column 4) divided by the original sample size (Column 3). Note that these numbers will be less than or equal to the numbers in Column 2.
- Column 9: Form 2 (in Excel form) will automatically calculate the relative stratum weight by dividing the estimated number of eligible outlets in the population for each stratum in Column 8 by the Total of the values in Column 8.
- Column 10: Form 2 (in Excel form) will automatically calculate each stratum's contribution to the state weighted RVR by multiplying the stratum RVR (Column 7) by the relative stratum weight (Column 9). The weighted RVR for the state will be shown in the Total row of Column 10.
- Column 11: Form 2 (in Excel form) automatically calculates the standard error of each stratum's RVR (Column 7). The standard error for the state weighted RVR will be shown in the Total row of Column 11.
- TOTAL: For Columns 2–6, Form 2 (in Excel form) provides totals for the state as a whole in the last row of the table. For Columns 7–11, it calculates the respective statistic for the state as a whole.

**FORM 2 (Optional) Appropriate for stratified simple or systematic random sampling designs.**

Calculation of Weighted Retailer Violation Rate										
										State: _____
										FFY: 2026
(1) Stratum Name	(2) N Number of Outlets in Sampling Frame	(3) n Original Sample Size	(4) n1 Number of Sample Outlets Found Eligible	(5) n2 Number of Outlets Inspected	(6) x Number of Outlets Found in Violation	(7) p=x/n2 Stratum Retailer Violation Rate	(8) N'=N(n1/n) Estimated Number of Eligible Outlets in Population	(9) w=N'/Total Column 8 Relative Stratum Weight	(10) pw Stratum Contribution to State Weighted RVR	(11) s.e. Standard Error of Stratum RVR
<b>Total</b>										

- N - number of outlets in sampling frame  
 n - original sample size (number of outlets in the original sample)  
 n1 - number of sample outlets that were found to be eligible  
 n2 - number of eligible outlets that were inspected  
 x - number of inspected outlets that were found in violation  
 p - stratum retailer violation rate ( $p=x/n2$ )  
 N' - estimated number of eligible outlets in population ( $N'=N*n1/n$ )  
 w - relative stratum weight ( $w=N'/\text{Total Column 8}$ )  
 pw - stratum contribution to the weighted RVR  
 s.e. - standard error of the stratum RVR

**FORM 3 (Required when a cluster design is used for all states not using the Synar Survey Estimation System [SSES] to analyze the Synar survey data.)**

Complete Form 3 to report information about primary sampling units when a cluster design was used for the Synar survey.

**Instructions for Completing Form 3:** In the top right-hand corner of the form, provide the state name and reporting federal fiscal year (FFY 2026).

Provide information by stratum if stratification was used. Make copies of the form if additional rows are needed to list all the strata.

Column 1: Sequentially number each row.

Column 2: *If stratification was used:* Write in the name of stratum. All strata in the state must be listed.

*If no stratification was used:* Write “state” in the first row to indicate that the whole state constitutes a single stratum.

Column 3: Report the number of primary sampling units (PSUs) (i.e., first-stage clusters) created for each stratum.

Column 4: Report the number of PSUs selected in the original sample for each stratum.

Column 5: Report the number of PSUs in the final sample for each stratum.

TOTALS: For Columns 3–5, provide totals for the state as a whole in the last row of the table.

Summary of Clusters Created and Sampled				
State: _____				
FFY: 2026				
(1) Row #	(2) Stratum Name	(3) Number of PSUs Created	(4) Number of PSUs Selected	(5) Number of PSUs in the Final Sample
Total				



**FORM 4 (Required for all states not using the Synar Survey Estimation System [SSES] to analyze the Synar Survey data)**

Complete Form 4 to provide detailed tallies of ineligible sample outlets by reasons for ineligibility and detailed tallies of eligible sample outlets with noncomplete inspections by reasons for noncompletion.

**Instructions for Completing Form 4:** In the top right-hand corner of the form, provide the state name and reporting federal fiscal year (FFY 2026).

Column 1(a): Enter the number of sample outlets found ineligible for inspection by reason for ineligibility. Provide the total number of ineligible outlets in the row marked “Total.”

Column 2(a): Enter the number of eligible sample outlets with noncomplete inspections by reason for noncompletion. Provide the total number of eligible outlets with noncomplete inspections in the row marked “Total.”

<b>Inspection Tallies by Reason of Ineligibility or Noncompletion</b> <b>State:</b> _____ <b>FFY:</b> 2026 _____			
<b>(1) INELIGIBLE</b>		<b>(2) ELIGIBLE</b>	
<b>Reason for Ineligibility</b>	<b>(a) Counts</b>	<b>Reason for Noncompletion</b>	<b>(a) Counts</b>
Out of business		In operation but closed at time of visit	
Does not sell tobacco products		Unsafe to access	
Inaccessible by youth or young adult		Presence of police	
Private club or private residence		Youth or young adult inspector knows salesperson	
Temporary closure		Moved to new location	
Unlocatable		Drive-thru only/youth or young adult inspector has no driver's license	
Wholesale only/Carton sale only		Tobacco out of stock	
Vending machine broken		Ran out of time	
Duplicate		Other noncompletion reason(s) <i>(Describe.)</i>	
Other ineligibility reason(s) <i>(Describe.)</i>			
<b>Total</b>		<b>Total</b>	

**FORM 5 (Required for all states not using the Synar Survey Estimation System [SSES] to analyze the Synar survey data)**

Complete Form 5 to show the distribution of outlet inspection results by age and gender of the youth and young adult inspectors.

**Instructions for Completing Form 5:** In the top right-hand corner of the form, provide the state name and reporting federal fiscal year (FFY 2026).

Column 1: Enter the number of attempted buys by youth and young adult inspector age and gender.

Column 2: Enter the number of successful buys by youth and young adult inspector age and gender.

If the inspectors are age eligible but the gender of the inspector is unknown, include those inspections in the “Other” row. Calculate subtotals for males and females in rows marked “Male Subtotal” and “Female Subtotal.” Sum subtotals for Male, Female, and Other and record in the bottom row marked “Total.” Verify that the total of attempted buys and successful buys equals the total for Column 4(c) and Column 5(c), respectively, on Form 1. If the totals do not match, please explain any discrepancies.

Synar Survey Inspector Characteristics		
		State: _____
		FFY: 2026
	(1) Attempted Buys	(2) Successful Buys
<b>Male</b>		
15 years		
16 years		
17 years		
18 years		
19 years		
20 years		
<b>Male Subtotal</b>		
<b>Female</b>		
15 years		
16 years		
17 years		
18 years		
19 years		
20 years		
<b>Female Subtotal</b>		
<b>Other</b>		
<b>Total</b>		

## **APPENDIXES B & C: FORMS**

### Instructions

Appendix B (Sampling Design) and Appendix C (Inspection Protocol) are to reflect the state's CSAP-approved sampling design and inspection protocol. These appendixes, therefore, should generally describe the design and protocol and, with the exception of Question #10 of Appendix B, are not to be modified with year-specific information. Please note that any changes to either appendix must receive CSAP's advance, written approval. To facilitate the state's completion of this section, simply cut and paste the previously approved sampling design (Appendix B) and inspection protocol (Appendix C) and respond to Question #10 of Appendix B to provide the requested information about sample size calculations for the Synar survey conducted in FFY 2025.

## APPENDIX B: SYNAR SURVEY SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

State: PR  
FFY: 2026

### 1. What type of sampling frame is used?

- ☒ List frame (*Go to Question 2.*)  
☐ Area frame (*Go to Question 3.*)  
☐ List-assisted area frame (*Go to Question 2.*)

### 2. List all sources of the list frame. Indicate the type of source from the list below. Provide a brief description of the frame source. Explain how the lists are updated (method), including how new outlets are identified and added to the frame. In addition, explain how often the lists are updated (cycle). (*After completing this question, go to Question 4.*)

*Use the corresponding number to indicate Type of Source in the table below.*

- 1 – Statewide commercial business list      4 – Statewide retail license/permit list  
 2 – Local commercial business list      5 – Statewide liquor license/permit list  
 3 – Statewide tobacco license/permit list      6 – Other

Name of Frame Source	Type of Source	Description	Updating Method and Cycle
Permit Management Office – List of Licensed Tobacco Outlets	3	The list contained the licensed tobacco outlets within the 78 Puerto Rico municipalities.	The Permit Management Office provides MHAASA officials with an updated list of licensed tobacco on an annual basis.
Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services Administration (MHAASA) – List of Annual Orientations to Tobacco Outlets	6	The list contained the tobacco outlets that were oriented by MHAASA staff within the 78 Puerto Rico municipalities.	The MHAASA Tobacco Division continuously updates the database with the information collected in the orientation visits to tobacco outlets.

### 3. If an area frame is used, describe how area sampling units are defined and formed.

#### a. Is any area left out in the formation of the area frame?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*If Yes, what percentage of the state's population is not covered by the area frame?*  
 \_\_\_\_\_%

### 4. Federal regulation requires that vending machines be inspected as part of the Synar survey. Are vending machines included in the Synar survey?

☒ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

If **No**, please indicate the reason(s) they are not included in the Synar survey. Please check all that apply.

- ☐ State law bans vending machines.
- ☐ State law bans vending machines from locations accessible to youth and young adults.
- ☐ State has a contract with the FDA and is actively enforcing the vending machine requirements of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act.
- ☐ Other (Please describe.) \_\_\_\_\_

If Yes, please indicate how likely it is that vending machines will be sampled.

- ☐ Vending machines are sampled separately to ensure vending machines are included in the sample
- ☒ Vending machines are sampled together with over the counter outlets, so it is possible that no vending machines were sampled, however they are included in the sampling frame and have a non-zero probability of selection
- ☐ Other reasons (Please describe.) \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Which category below best describes the sample design? (Check only one.)**

☐ **Census** (STOP HERE: Appendix B is complete.)

**Unstratified statewide sample:**

- ☐ Simple random sample (Go to Question 9.)
- ☒ Systematic random sample (Go to Question 6.)
- ☐ Single-stage cluster sample (Go to Question 8.)
- ☐ Multistage cluster sample (Go to Question 8.)

**Stratified sample:**

- ☐ Simple random sample (Go to Question 7.)
- ☐ Systematic random sample (Go to Question 6.)
- ☐ Single-stage cluster sample (Go to Question 7.)
- ☐ Multistage cluster sample (Go to Question 7.)
- ☐ **Other** (Please describe and go to Question 9.) \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Describe the systematic sampling methods. (After completing Question 6, go to Question 7 if stratification is used. Otherwise go to Question 9.)**

The sampling methodology used in this study consists of systematic sample selection. This statistical method involves selecting every kth element from a sampling frame, where k, the sampling interval, is calculated as  $k = \text{population size (N)}/\text{sample size (n)}$ . Using this procedure, each element in the population has a known and equal probability of selection. This makes systematic sampling functionally like simple random sampling. It is, however, more efficient (if the variance within the systematic sample exceeds the population variance) and much less expensive to carry out (Daniel, W. 1995).

The sampling frame includes over-the-counter (OTC) and vending machine (VM) outlets. From the sampling frame, a starting point is chosen using a random number generator, and after that, outlets are selected at regular intervals. The systematic sample of outlets is selected to conduct the study across areas of the island represented by the 10 MHAASA Regional Prevention Centers. Each Regional Prevention Center provides prevention services to a predefined geographic region within the 78 Puerto Rico municipalities.

**7. Provide the following information about stratification.**

**a. Provide a full description of the strata that are created.**

**b. Is clustering used within the stratified sample?**

☐ **Yes** *(Go to Question 8.)*

☐ **No** *(Go to Question 9.)*

**8. Provide the following information about clustering.**

**a. Provide a full description of how clusters are formed. (If multistage clusters are used, give definitions of clusters at each stage.)**

**b. Specify the sampling method (simple random, systematic, or probability proportional to size sampling) for each stage of sampling and describe how the method(s) is (are) implemented.**

**9. Provide the following information about determining the Synar Sample.**

**a. Was the Synar Survey Estimation System (SSES) used to calculate the sample size?**

☒ **Yes** *(Respond to part b.)*

☐ **No** *(Respond to part c and Question 10c.)*

**b. SSES Sample Size Calculator used?**

☒ **State Level** *(Respond to Question 10a.)*

☐ **Stratum Level** *(Respond to Question 10a and 10b.)*

**c. Provide the formulas for determining the effective, target, and original outlet sample sizes.**

The SESS Sample Size Calculator determined the minimum adequate sample size. Below is the formula for calculating a sample size using a one-tail test:

Effective sample size:

$$\frac{1}{\left(\frac{(s.e.)^2}{P(1-P)} + \frac{1}{N}\right)}$$

where P is the maximum allowed RVR\*,  
s.e. is the standard error of the estimate, and  
N is the total number of outlets in the sample frame.

The target sample size ( $n_t$ ) is the effective sample size times the design effect from the previous year.

The original sample size is determined by:

$$n_o = (1 + s) \frac{n_t}{r_l r_c}$$

where s is the safety margin of 25%,  
 $r_l$  is the eligibility rate from previous year, and  
 $r_c$  is the completion rate from previous year.

\*Synar activities are intended to keep the RVR below the 20%. So, the relevant null hypothesis is that the true RVR is 20% or higher. Thus, the calculated sample size will allow us to test if the RVR estimate in Puerto Rico was lower than the maximum allowed RVR.

**10. Provide the following information about sample size calculations for the Synar survey conducted in FFY 2025.**

- a. If the state uses the sample size formulas embedded in the SSES Sample Size Calculator to calculate the state level sample size, please provide the following information:**

**Inputs for Effective Sample Size:**

RVR: 20%

Frame Size: 5,991

**Input for Target Sample Size:**

Design Effect: 1

**Inputs for Original Sample Size:**

Safety Margin: 25%

Accuracy (Eligibility) Rate: 77.30%

Completion Rate: 92.10%

- b. If the state uses the sample size formulas embedded in the SSES Sample Size Calculator to calculate the stratum level sample sizes, please provide the stratum level information:**

- c. If the state does not use the sample size formulas embedded in the SSES Sample Size Calculator, please provide all inputs required to calculate the effective, target, and original sample sizes as indicated in Question 9.**

## APPENDIX C: SYNAR SURVEY INSPECTION PROTOCOL SUMMARY

State: PR

FFY: 2026

***Note: Upload to WebBGAS a copy of the Synar inspection form under the heading “Synar Inspection Form” and a copy of the protocol used to train inspection teams on conducting and reporting the results of the Synar inspections under the heading “Synar Inspection Protocol.”***

### 1. How does the state Synar survey protocol address the following?

#### a. Consummated buy attempts?

- ☐ Required
- ☐ Permitted under specified circumstances (Describe:      )
- ☒ Not permitted

#### b. Youth and young adult inspectors to carry ID?

- ☒ Required
- ☐ Permitted under specified circumstances (Describe:      )
- ☐ Not permitted

#### c. Adult inspectors to enter the outlet?

- ☐ Required
- ☒ Permitted under specified circumstances (Describe: When the retailer was found in violation, the MHAASA personnel and the Internal Revenue Service Agents entered the outlet to give a warning)
- ☐ Not permitted

#### d. Youth and young adult inspectors to be compensated?

- ☒ Required
- ☐ Permitted under specified circumstances (Describe:      )
- ☐ Not permitted

### 2. Identify the agency(ies) or entity(ies) that actually conduct the random, unannounced Synar inspections of tobacco outlets. (Check all that apply.)

- ☒ Law enforcement agency(ies)
- ☒ State or local government agency(ies) other than law enforcement
- ☐ Private contractor(s)
- ☒ Other

List the agency name(s): Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services Administration  
and the Puerto Rico Treasury Department



**3. Are Synar inspections combined with law enforcement efforts (i.e., do law enforcement representatives issue warnings or citations to retailers found in violation of the law at the time of the inspection?)?**

☒ Always   ☐ Usually   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ Never

**4. Describe the type of tobacco products that are requested during Synar inspections.**

**a. What type of tobacco products are requested during the inspection?**

- ☒ Cigarettes
- ☐ Small Cigars
- ☐ Cigarillos
- ☐ Smokeless Tobacco
- ☒ Electronic Cigarettes/Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)
- ☐ Other

**b. Describe the protocol for identifying what types of products and what brands of products are requested during an inspection.**

The youth inspectors enter the outlet selected in the sample list with discretion. They must observe where the cigarettes are located and check if there are one of the following brands: Newport or Marlboro. Youth inspectors ask the clerk for a pack of cigarettes from one of the brands mentioned. Youth inspectors are supposed to only ask the clerk once for a pack of cigarettes. If there is a smoke shop in the sample, the youth inspectors should ask for an electronic cigarette.

**5a. Describe the methods used to recruit, select, and train adult supervisors.**

MHAASA's Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Assistant Administration operates ten Regional Prevention Centers (RPC) throughout the island. Each RPC provides services to a predefined geographic region serving 78 municipalities. The manager of each RPC decided which staff of its center was the adult supervisor.

One staff member of the RPC always supervised the youth inspectors, but they never entered the outlet when the youth inspector was attempting to buy cigarettes. They were trained to provide transportation, locate the outlets, verify the locations, and supervise all inspection procedures.

When the retailer was found violating the law during the inspection, the MHAASA personnel and the Internal Revenue Agents entered the outlet to issue a warning. All the Synar personnel (RPC, staff, agents of the Puerto Rico Treasury Department, and the youth inspectors) were trained by the investigators and participated in role-playing exercises.

**5b. Describe the methods used to recruit, select, and train youth and young adult inspectors.**

The RPC staff identified candidates for youth inspectors in the geographic region. The candidates had to be 18 years of age at the time of operation and be youthful in appearance. Also, they had to have good communication skills, follow specific and general directions, be available to work after regular hours or on weekends, and visit outlets from different

municipalities in the assigned RPC. All the candidates must possess a valid identification card.

The RPC staff interviewed youth inspector candidates and submitted a listing of preliminary choices to the MHAASA Prevention Tobacco Coordinator, who conducted a second interview. In the second interview, the Tobacco Coordinator explored the applicant's interest in participating in the study, verifying the candidate's physical appearance, verbal and writing skills, capacity, and willingness to follow instructions. After the selection, applicants had to comply with the agency's contracting requirements.

Each RPC contracted at least one youth inspector to conduct the random unannounced inspection as required. Youth inspectors were trained on the inspection protocol using written materials, verbal instructions, videos, role-play exercises, and data collection methods by the investigators.

**6. Are there specific legal or procedural requirements instituted by the state to address the issue of youth and young adult inspectors' immunity when conducting inspections?**

**a. Legal**

☐ Yes ☒ No

*(If Yes, please describe.)*

**b. Procedural**

☐ Yes ☒ No

*(If Yes, please describe.)*

**7. Are there specific legal or procedural requirements instituted by the state to address the issue of the safety of youth and young adult inspectors during all aspects of the Synar inspection process?**

**a. Legal**

☐ Yes ☒ No

*(If Yes, please describe.)*

**b. Procedural**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*(If Yes, please describe.)*

Youth inspectors must follow these instructions:

The youth inspectors are required to always use a face mask.

One staff member of the RPC always accompanies them.

Staff members do not enter the outlet when the youth attempt to buy cigarettes.

If there is a violation during the Synar inspection, all intervention with the retailer is done by the MHAASA personnel and the Internal Revenue Agents of the Treasury Department. Immediately after the attempt to purchase was made, the youth inspectors were instructed to leave the premises.

Youth do not enter any outlet if they feel that their surroundings make them concerned about their safety, and in such cases, they are instructed to leave the premises. A further attempt is made to complete the inspection.

**8. Are there any other legal or procedural requirements the state has regarding how inspections are to be conducted (e.g., age of youth and young adult inspector, time of inspections, training that must occur)?**

**a. Legal**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*(If Yes, please describe.)*

Puerto Rico cannot use underage youth inspectors for the Synar Study. As amended, Puerto Rico Law 57 of 2023 forbids this for considering it a risky activity. A consultation was made with the Department of Justice, and the Children's Advocate indicated that the use of underage youth could not be approved due to an interpretation of the law that places the youth's welfare at risk.

**b. Procedural**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*(If Yes, please describe.)*

The youth inspectors were 18-20 years of age with a youthful appearance. The researcher trained all the youth inspectors, agents of the Department of Treasury, and RPC staff on data collection methods.

## APPENDIX D: LIST SAMPLING FRAME COVERAGE STUDY

(LIST FRAME ONLY)

State: PR  
FFY: 2026

1. Calendar year of the coverage study: 2025

2.   a. Unweighted percent coverage found: 91%  
     b. Weighted percent coverage found: 85%  
     c. Number of outlets found through canvassing: 60  
     d. Number of outlets matched on the list frame: 55

3.   a. Describe how areas were defined. (e.g., census tracts, counties, etc.)

The area frame used for the Puerto Rico Synar Coverage Study consists of all census blocks across the island. Census blocks are the smallest geographic units defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. They are typically bounded by visible features such as streets, roads, and streams, as well as by invisible boundaries including city limits, property lines, and short imaginary extensions of streets and roads.

b. Were any areas of the state excluded from sampling?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

*If Yes, please explain.*

4. Please answer the following questions about the selection of canvassing areas.

a. Which category below best describes the sample design? (Check only one.)

☐ Census (Go to Question 6.)

**Unstratified statewide sample:**

☐ Simple random sample (Respond to Part b.)

☐ Systematic random sample (Respond to Part b.)

☐ Single-stage cluster sample (Respond to Parts b and d.)

☐ Multistage cluster sample (Respond to Parts b and d.)

**Stratified sample:**

☐ Simple random sample (Respond to Parts b and c.)

☒ Systematic random sample (Respond to Parts b and c.)

☐ Single-stage cluster sample (Respond to Parts b, c, and d.)

☐ Multistage cluster sample (Respond to Parts b, c, and d.)

☐ Other (Please describe and respond to Part b.) \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Describe the sampling methods.**

A total of 320 census blocks were systematically selected from the list of all inhabited census blocks across Puerto Rico. This list was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau website and organized by municipality.

**c. Provide a full description of the strata that were created.**

MHAASA operates 10 Regional Prevention Centers across Puerto Rico. Each center is responsible for a predefined geographic region that, collectively, covers all 78 municipalities of the island. For the purposes of this study, each prevention region was defined as a stratum.

**d. Provide a full description of how clusters were formed.**

**5. Were borders of the selected areas clearly identified at the time of canvassing?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

**6. Were all sampled areas visited by canvassing teams?**

☒ Yes (*Go to Question 7.*) ☐ No (*Respond to Parts a and b.*)

**a. Was the subset of areas randomly chosen?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**b. Describe how the subsample of visited areas was drawn. Include the number of areas sampled and the number of areas canvassed.**

**7. Were field observers provided with a detailed map of the canvassing areas?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*If No, describe the canvassing instructions given to the field observers.*

**8. Were field observers instructed to find all outlets in the assigned area?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

*If No, respond to Question 9.*

*If Yes, describe any instructions given to the field observers to ensure the entire area was canvassed, then go to Question 10.*

Personnel from the Regional Prevention Centers of the state agency were trained to conduct the field survey. Each field team was provided with maps of the selected census blocks and canvassing log sheets to guide data collection. The maps showed the block boundaries and street layouts to ensure accurate coverage. Field staff visited each selected census block, canvassed the entire area, and documented all commercial establishments identified. Upon

completing the canvassing, the field workers performed a final verification to confirm that all routes and locations had been covered and that all required information on the identified outlets had been collected.

**9. If a full canvassing was not conducted:**

- a. How many predetermined outlets were to be observed in each area? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What were the starting points for each area? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Were these starting points randomly chosen?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
- d. Describe the selection of the starting points.

- e. Please describe the canvassing instructions given to the field observers, including predetermined routes.

**10. Describe the process field observers used to determine if an outlet sold tobacco.**

The field staff entered each establishment to determine cigarette sales and to collect information required for the survey (e.g. name, address, phone number, business type, license number). First, the staff conducted a visual scan of the establishment and determined if there was a vending machine in the outlet. The field team visited a total of 185 business establishments. The final list of canvassed tobacco-selling outlets included 60 establishments, 55 with valid licenses to sell tobacco and currently selling tobacco (n=55 over the counter; n=0 vending machine), and 5 without a valid license.

**11. Please provide the state's definition of "matches" or "mismatches" to the Synar sampling frame? (i.e., address, business name, business license number, etc.)**

Matches were primarily defined as outlets whose on-site license number exactly corresponded to the license number in the Synar sampling frame. The matching process was conducted in two steps. In the first step, outlets were matched directly by license number. Outlets appearing in both the field list and the master list were classified as *matches*. In the second step, the remaining outlets were cross-checked using the outlet name, the proprietor's name, and the address, respectively. Outlets meeting all three criteria were also classified as *matches*. Outlets that did not meet these criteria were classified as *mismatches*.

**12. Provide the calculation of the weighted percent coverage (if applicable).**

The weight was calculated as the inverse of the probability of selection of the Census Block multiplied by the fraction of the block's population sampled.

$$W = \frac{1}{\text{Probability of Selection } i} * \frac{\text{Number of blocks in Sample}}{\text{Total number of blocks in the state}}$$

where  $i$  = strata.