

## The Consumer Healthcare Products Association's Anti-Smurfing Initiative

### Background

The manufacturers of popular cold and allergy medicines containing pseudoephedrine—medicines like Advil Cold & Sinus, Allegra-D, Claritin-D, Mucinex D, and Sudafed—remain committed to stopping diversion of these products for illicit use.

Twenty four states have enacted laws requiring implementation of electronic real-time, stop-sale systems that prevent illegal sales at the point of purchase. This technology unifies the logbooks that were previously kept in each individual store, preventing criminals from going over the legal limit by visiting multiple stores and across state lines. This behavior is commonly referred to as “smurfing”.

There have been reports, however, of criminal activity extended beyond the meth cooks. Some hardened criminals approach third parties to purchase pseudoephedrine for them. Making an illegal purchase for a third party is a felony and the public-private partnership aims to educate the community on the serious consequences this practice holds, including prison time.

While meth cooks understand they can go to jail for their illegal behavior, individuals who smurf for payment may be unaware that their behavior can lead to prison time. We believe the retail counter is a very effective place to educate potential smurfers about the consequences of their intended actions.

### The Anti-Smurfing Initiative

Manufacturers have voluntarily developed an anti-smurfing educational program for the retail setting that will be offered to retailers at no cost. The intent is to educate potential illegal purchasers about related criminal penalties and how the real-time, stop-sale system currently used by retailers and law enforcement works (at the point of sale electronically capturing information and looking for suspicious sales).

This program features posters designed for retail display that would capture the attention of potential smurfers and relay a consequence of what they are about to do. We tested a range of anti-smurfing messages qualitatively, and these posters quantitatively. Our research affirmed that the final posters strike the appropriate balance of educating potential smurfers about the consequence of what they are about to do without alarming law-abiding people who just want to get their cold and allergy medicine.

*For more information or to learn how to get involved, contact Melvin Maraman ([mlmaraman@bellsouth.com](mailto:mlmaraman@bellsouth.com)) or CHPA's Katie Bernard ([kbernard@chpa-info.org](mailto:kbernard@chpa-info.org)) or 202.429.9620).*