

## Drug Paraphernalia Dilemma...

### Protecting Our Children

#### Human Services Spotlight Series #21

In February of 2021, an Oldsmar resident watched a vehicle pull up to his home and the driver place a package in his mailbox. Once the vehicle left, the resident checked his mailbox and found the package was a delivery from a local smoke shop. The package contained vaping products, drug paraphernalia, and a receipt in the name of the man's 17-year-old daughter. The minor admitted to her father that she purchased the items from the smoke shop's website using her debit card. The father then filed a complaint with Pinellas County Consumer Protection.

Upon investigation, it was found that the smoke shop had conducted online sales of vaping products and drug paraphernalia to the complainant's 17-year-old daughter on sixteen occasions between October of 2020 and March of 2021. As a result, Consumer Protection issued a written warning to the smoke shop for selling drug paraphernalia to an underage person in violation of the County's drug paraphernalia ordinance.

Online sales of tobacco products including vaping supplies are prohibited by federal law from being delivered by the United States Postal Service. Because of this, the smoke shop has been offering delivery service within the local Pinellas County area. Since the complaint, the business took steps to combat the illegal online sales and delivery of tobacco products and drug paraphernalia to minors by requiring age verification at the time of delivery and a signature from a person at least twenty-one years old. The shop is also working with its' financial institution, Square



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Online, to add safeguards to the payment of online sales to ensure purchasers are of legal age.

This case is a good example that bringing an investigation to a successful conclusion can include helping a violator come into compliance with all applicable laws and ordinances. In this incident, the smoke shop was issued a written warning for violating a local ordinance resulting in the business taking steps to ensure the violation did not happen again.

## Protect

## Regulate

## Investigate

## Educate

Did you know that Consumer Protection is responsible for licensing and enforcement of nine additional county ordinances that help protect the citizens of Pinellas County? These include:

### Licensing

- Organizations conducting Bingo
- High-Prescribing Health Clinics
- Adult Use establishments in unincorporated areas of Pinellas County

### Monitoring

- Towing rates
- Moving services
- Human Trafficking public awareness signs
- Price gouging during a state of emergency
- Charitable solicitations
- Fortunetelling

Consumer Protection works to find solutions that restore fairness and ensure legal compliance. Millions of dollars have been recovered for consumers through refunds, adjustments, and court-ordered restitution. The dedicated employees of Pinellas County Consumer Protection are here to assist you. Investigators are available to speak with you regarding a consumer transaction at (727) 464-6200.

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