

Colorado**Strategies to Prevent Premature Deaths from Smoking****Public Health Problem**

Tobacco use, the leading cause of preventable death in the nation, kills an estimated 4,616 Coloradans each year. Additionally, more than 47,500 high school students smoke—with 5,800 becoming new smokers daily -- and 193,000 Colorado children are exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes. Vigorous, science-based strategies were required to prevent the thousands of premature deaths that result from cigarette smoking in the state.

Program Example

Colorado's State Education and Prevention Partnership (STEPP), which was created to combat this serious public health issue, administers a grant program to nonprofit organizations and government agencies working in tobacco control in the state. Currently funded annually with approximately \$26 million from excise taxes obtained through a voter ballot initiative, STEPP provides programs and policies that are comprehensive, evidence-based, culturally appropriate, and cost effective.

OSH has provided consultation and guidance to assist Colorado with evaluating and publishing data regarding its program efforts. During the past three years, strong collaboration with community partners led to enactment of a statewide comprehensive smoke-free air law—strengthened this past year with the removal of the casino exemption. (All Colorado casinos were required to be smokefree by January 1, 2008.)

Highlights of the program contributions include

- Providing a significant impact on reducing tobacco-related disparities in the mental health population with the publication of *Smoking Cessation for Persons with Mental Illness: A Toolkit for Mental Health Providers*, in collaboration with the University of Colorado at Denver.
- Creating innovative media campaigns to reach and empower young adults as a result of extensive market research through focus groups with 18-to-24-year-olds. Uniquely designed web pages such as www.ownyourC.com, www.quitdoingit.com, and www.fixnixer.com have increased calls to the state's quitline from young adults by 40%.
- Designing and implementing one of the first online cessation tools for teenagers and young adults that allows users to customize a 21-day quitting program utilizing text messages and e-mail. While this tool will be formally evaluated in 2008, it has already become one of the leading models of youth cessation for other states.

Implications and Impact

As a result of an integrated, evidence-based program, Colorado now ranks 9th in the nation for the lowest adult prevalence rate, up from a ranking of 14th in 2005. Adult smoking rates currently stand at 17.9%, which is a drop from 22.3% in 2001—and which surpasses the 2006 national average of 20.1%. The high school youth smoking rate in 2006 stands at 14.6%, compared with 18.2% in 2001, thus surpassing the CDC *Healthy People 2010* goal of 16%. The program's quitline has a six-month quit rate of 38%, and substantial changes in attitudes toward smoking are reflected by 81% of Coloradans implementing smoke-free home rules.