

TOBACCO CONTROL PROGRAM (TCP)

Rhode Island Department of Health

ABOUT:

The Rhode Island Tobacco Control Program is the governmental organization in Rhode Island responsible for addressing smoking as a major public health problem. The TCP has four major goals, which were adopted by a statewide Coalition.

GOAL:

- Eliminate non-smokers' exposure to secondhand smoke
- Prevent youth initiation of tobacco use
- Increase quitting attempts among adults and youth
- Eliminate disparities related to tobacco use among different population groups

HOW TO:

The activities of the Tobacco Control Program work toward reaching the goals of Healthy People 2010 and utilize a strategic plan based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These recommendations are the product of the successes of previous tobacco control activities in states like Massachusetts, California, Oregon and Florida. There is no single magic bullet that is successful in tobacco prevention and it has been found that a multi-pronged approach has the greatest success in reducing smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke. The various components of the Tobacco Control Program, include: community; schools; counter-marketing; cessation; statewide programs; enforcement; and health disparities.

BUDGET:

The Tobacco Control Program is funded with federal funding from the Centers of Disease Prevention and Control and RI state legislature appropriate funding. The CDC has recommended funding levels between \$10 and \$22 million to conduct an effective program. Currently the TCP is funded below the \$10 million minimum level.

BEST PRACTICES:

- **Address policy at the state level.** Rhode Island has one of the highest cigarette tax rates in the country at \$2.46 per pack and also increased the tax on smokeless tobacco products from 20% to 30% of wholesale price. They are also one of only a few states that passed legislation requiring health insurance companies to cover smoking cessation treatment services.
- **Focus on environment and community as the main source of change.** The Comprehensive Tobacco Control (CTC) Initiative is a multi-component intervention designed to create systems and personal change within communities. The Initiative strives to "change the way tobacco is promoted, sold and used while changing the knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people, tobacco users and nonusers." One of the Tobacco Control Program's major areas of focus is a GIS community mapping assessment of tobacco retailers. The goals of the project are to expose industry tactics of tobacco retail promotions and advertising and to reduce the disparity in the number of cigarette retailers accounted for by economic and racial/ethnic characteristics of communities.
- **Access:** Tobacco cessation products and services are made readily available to all residents of Rhode Island, regardless of insurance. Phone counseling, an interactive website, and other smoking cessation materials are made available to all Rhode Islanders. Tobacco Cessation

services, including counseling and nicotine replacement therapy, are reimbursed by health insurers. In addition, Rhode Island is part of a tobacco treatment collaborative with Massachusetts and New Hampshire to share quit line resources.

- **Community involvement:** One of the Tobacco Control Program's media initiatives included funding media mini-grants to local community-based agencies to conduct activities around national tobacco control events. In 2007 they funded 17 local agencies to conduct anti-tobacco activities for World No Tobacco Day.

OVERALL LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Don't underestimate the power and effectiveness of grassroots outreach.** While it is important and entirely necessary to address systems change on a policy level, often the greatest level of success in addressing behavioral change comes from a grassroots approach.
- **Utilize the strengths and resources of partnerships.** The Tobacco Control Program is a member of the National Alliance for Tobacco Cessation, a growing group of states, non-profit organizations, foundations, and corporations dedicated to helping people quit smoking. As part of NATC, The Tobacco Control Program has access to media campaign materials, including TV, radio, online, out-of-home advertising, and BecomeAnEx.org. Through BecomeAnEx.org, Rhode Islanders have access to a social networking community and can get personalized quit plans, share stories and quit strategies with other quitters.

CONTACT:

Seema Dixit
Program Manager
Rhode Island Department of Health
Division of Community Health & Equity
3 Capitol Hill, Room 409
Providence, RI 02908
PHONE: 401-222-7463
Seema.dixit@health.ri.gov
<http://www.health.ri.gov/tobacco/index.php>