



Combining Efforts to Promote Comprehensive Tobacco Control, Progressing Toward a Tobacco-Free State

Public Health Problem

Of the more than 33 million people living in California, 27.3% are aged 18 years or younger, and an estimated 16.4% of adults smoke. If current tobacco-use patterns persist, one-third of tobacco-using teens currently aged 18 years or younger will die prematurely of a smoking-related disease during adulthood.

Program Example

California became the first state to launch a comprehensive tobacco control program after voters approved legislation in 1988. Over the past decade, the program has made significant progress toward a tobacco-free California through the efforts of local health departments, community-based organizations, a statewide media campaign, and other statewide support systems. Activities are diverse and include a toll-free telephone service to help smokers, their families, and friends; a smoke-free workplace law; and increases in the state cigarette excise tax.

Implications and Impact

The California Smokers' Helpline has helped more than 255,876 tobacco users, friends, and family from its inception in 1992 through December 2002. Because of the statewide smoke-free workplace law, virtually all indoor workplaces in the state are now smoke free, including restaurants, bars, and gaming clubs. In 1999, the state cigarette excise tax rose from 37 cents a pack to 87 cents a pack. These efforts have made a difference for both adults and young people. In 2002, 16.4% of California adults smoked cigarettes, down from 18.6% in 1996, according to the state's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Youth rates of tobacco use are well below national rates: 27.8% of California high school students used any tobacco product (vs. 34.5% nationally), and 21.6% smoked cigarettes (vs. 28.0% nationally), according to data from the 2000 Youth Tobacco Survey. Between 1990 and 2000, per capita cigarette consumption declined by 51% and was the lowest of any state in 2000 and 2001. California's tobacco control program demonstrates an effective tobacco control program supported by adequate resources and sustained over time.

Contact Information

California Department of Health Services
P.O. Box 942732 • MS # 7206 • Sacramento, California 94234-7320
Phone: (916) 449-5482 • Fax: (916) 449-5505 • Web site: <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/ccb/TCS/index.htm>