

# *Tobacco Health Disparities Update*

News from the Washington State Department of Health  
Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

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## **Improving access to cessation services key to eliminating tobacco-related disparities**

Since 2000, adult smoking rates have dropped 25 percent in Washington State. However, some racial and ethnic communities, lesbian women and gay men, and persons with lower income or educational levels continue to have dramatically higher smoking rates than the general population. Most also have poor access to information and services to help them quit.

The diversity of populations that are impacted by high smoking rates, and the challenges of developing and delivering effective programs and services to each specific population, has led the Washington Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Control Program to explore innovative approaches to reaching those most in need.

Research clearly shows the link between high smoking rates and a variety of poor health outcomes. Thus, populations that experience tobacco-related disparities are likely to experience a variety of health-related disparities as well. To this end, the Tobacco Program has actively collaborated with other Department of Health programs and state agencies that serve similar audiences – such as the Women Infant and Children (WIC), maternal health, oral health, diabetes, asthma and Medicaid programs – to disseminate cessation information and promote access to the Tobacco Quit Line and other resources.

After several years of expanding its efforts to reduce the disproportionately high smoking rates and exposure to secondhand smoke among specific populations, the Tobacco Program will make addressing these tobacco-related disparities a priority for the next five years in its new strategic plan. Improving access to appropriate cessation information and services will be key to the success of this emerging program priority.

This issue of *Disparities Update* highlights some of the program's recent efforts to collaborate with community partners, other Department of Health programs and state agencies to improve access to cessation information and services that can help reduce smoking rates among populations at highest risk.



## Collaborations encourage smokers to call for help quitting

Tobacco Program collaborations with other agencies and programs extend the reach of tobacco prevention and cessation strategies. They also enhance the services that other programs and agencies provide to similar populations.

- ***Quit for You Quit for Two*** – Although the statewide rate of smoking among pregnant women is down to 10.2 percent, some groups of women continue to have higher than average rates, particularly young women (20 percent of those ages 15 to 19), women receiving Medicaid benefits (17 percent), and American Indian women (19 percent).

The Quit for You Quit for Two campaign, which began in early 2007, targets pregnant and postpartum women who smoke, and encourages them to call the Washington Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW) for help.

The campaign, funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, focuses on outreach to health care providers, pregnant and postpartum women, and friends and family.



The first phase of the campaign included developing and distributing informational and promotional items in collaboration with First Steps (Maternal Support Services) and the Maternal Infant Health programs, and media outreach. The second phase, which began in May 2008, includes increased support for First Steps clinic staff in making quit interventions and integrating those activities with existing work.

Recently, the Tobacco Quit Line began providing enhanced services for pregnant women, including up to ten calls with a Tobacco Quit Line coach.

Other Tobacco Program collaborations have included:

- Flyers with messages about the dangers of smoking while pregnant and around children, in English and Spanish, distributed to WIC, First Steps and Child Profile clients around the state.
- Support of the Washington State Diabetes Collaborative for incorporating cessation intervention in the services it provides to rural, tribal and other clinics. The Collaborative is helping more than 100 health care facilities statewide change the way they treat chronic diseases.
- Promoting the new tobacco cessation benefit for Medicaid clients, in collaboration with the state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), to ensure all clients of DSHS medical programs are aware of the new cessation benefit and how to access it. The new benefit, which is available through the Washington Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW), includes coaching, information and support. In addition, some Medicaid clients are also eligible for free nicotine gum and patches, and prescription medications if recommended by a quit coach and prescribed by a physician.

## Helping to change healthcare delivery systems

In addition to helping individuals quit smoking, the Tobacco Program works with health systems and organizations to integrate tobacco cessation practices into routine clinic or agency practices. This later approach helps ensure that cessation best practices become a long-term, routine part of medical care for all populations. Recent efforts include:

- **Rural hospital systems-change pilot project** – The Tobacco Cessation Resource Center launched a systems-change pilot project in September 2006 that involved Tobacco Program community contractors mentoring local rural hospital staff to expand tobacco prevention and cessation capacity. The second phase of the pilot project, which ran through June 2008, helped hospitals identify and track smokers, and provide cessation assistance as part of routine clinical practice.
- **Puyallup Tribe changes clinical practices** – A five-year effort to change tobacco cessation practices at the Puyallup Tribal Health Authority in Tacoma has resulted in more than 1,200 people quitting smoking. The Health Authority, a Tobacco Program contractor, has also seen a 60 percent decline in visits for upper respiratory infections, asthma, and coughs – three smoking-related health problems.

The declines resulted from the integration of the Public Health Service “Clinical Guidelines for Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence” into standard clinical practice in all four clinics: medical, dental, mental health, and pediatric.

The comprehensive, systematic approach involved everyone from clinic administrators to practitioners to patients.

- **Head Start** – The impact of tobacco use is considerable in the Head Start population. Increasing quitting among parents and household members benefits the children in a number of ways, including reducing exposure to secondhand smoke, a leading cause of childhood asthma and upper respiratory illness.

The Tobacco Program has funded two efforts in the Puget Sound region to integrate tobacco use screening and cessation referral into the standard family health assessments provided to many Head Start/Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) families.



In 2007, the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department provided training to family support staff at six Head Start/ECEAP sites on Brief Tobacco Intervention System Skills and on the use of motivational interviewing techniques. Seattle and King County Public Health is currently conducting similar support and training with 12 Head Start sites, and will add three additional sites this year.

## Training provides foundation for best practices

The Tobacco Program provides training support to other state agencies, tobacco prevention and healthcare organizations, and other tobacco prevention partners so they can be more effective in ensuring those at highest risk of smoking get the help they need.

- **Tobacco Prevention Resource Center (TPRC)** – TPRC is a Tobacco Program training and technical assistance provider that schedules about 50 trainings per year for health educators, community members and other tobacco prevention and healthcare professionals. The resource center also developed and conducted a specialized training, *Integrating Nicotine Dependence Interventions into Chemical Dependency Treatment*, to help substance abuse treatment agencies integrate nicotine treatment into their programs. More information is available at available at [www.tobaccoprc.org](http://www.tobaccoprc.org).
- **Tobacco Cessation Resource Center (TCRC)** – TCRC provides training and resources to local Tobacco Program contractors so they can train health professionals in tobacco intervention skills and techniques. The goal is to fully incorporate tobacco-use screening and referral of patients and clients who smoke into routine clinical practice. TCRC has produced a video to train health care providers in tobacco intervention; the video and other resources are available at [www.tobaccoprc.org/TCRC/](http://www.tobaccoprc.org/TCRC/).

## Culturally appropriate public awareness materials

Creating public awareness materials for diverse populations is a priority for the Tobacco Program. In 2006, the program assigned its media contractor to work directly with cross-cultural and tribal contractors to develop culturally appropriate messages and materials to raise awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke and promote the use of the state Tobacco Quit Line.

Materials developed in collaboration with the Asian/Pacific Islander, LGBT, Latino, African-American, Urban American Indian/Alaska Native and Washington Tribes communities include posters; print, transit and radio ads; fans; banners; and other materials – each tailored to the needs of the specific community.

In addition, specialty kits were developed for some communities, such as a quit kit for the African-American community that included mint and toothpick boxes, dog tags and a quit journal; and a clinic kit for the Urban Indian community that included a cessation brochure, poster and flyer.

This fall, the Tobacco Program will extend its cessation media outreach by sponsoring Spanish-language radio ads of the *BecomeAnEx* national cessation campaign. The ads will run from September through November 2008 in Washington counties with high numbers of Spanish speakers, and direct listeners to Spanish-speaking specialists of the Washington Tobacco Quit Line at 1-877-2NO-FUME. In addition, "photonovelas" will be distributed through clinics of the Washington Association of Migrant and Community Health Clinics facilities, at community events and through local health departments in the target counties.

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For more information about the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program's efforts to address disparities, visit [www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/disparities/disparity.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/disparities/disparity.htm).