

Community-Wide Effort: Make Florida Tobacco Free



“If all states required evidence-based practices like Florida did with their tobacco dollars, the result would be a more effective use of the tax dollars that are available.”

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Administrator
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Departments, Florida

More Information

Florida’s Department of
Health—*Tobacco Free
Florida*

www.tobaccofreeflorida.com

Partnership for Prevention’s
*Smoke Free Policies Action
Guide*

[www.prevent.org/data/
files/initiatives/
smokefreepolicies.pdf](http://www.prevent.org/data/files/initiatives/smokefreepolicies.pdf)

Community Guide:
Task Force Recommendations
On Tobacco Use

[www.thecommunityguide.org/
tobacco](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/tobacco)

CDC’s Office on
Smoking and Health
www.cdc.gov/tobacco

Tobacco use placed a staggering burden on Florida’s economy and quality of life with annual health costs of more than \$6 billion and tens of thousands of deaths per year.¹ More deaths are caused by tobacco use than by all deaths from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined.² Tobacco is recognized as a cause of multiple cancers, heart disease, stroke, complications of pregnancy, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.² Florida public health practitioners, community advocates, and residents joined forces to change state policy to require counties to implement evidence-based tobacco control interventions—including a number of recommendations made by the Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) and found in the *Guide to Community Preventive Services (Community Guide)*. This policy change laid the foundation for the use of effective public health interventions that dramatically reduced tobacco use in Florida.

Florida strives to be tobacco free

The Jefferson and Madison County Health Departments observed substantial increases in teen tobacco use in the absence of anti-tobacco interventions and education programs. They also noticed that tobacco companies began giving minors new opportunities to start using tobacco. "There were no restrictions whatsoever on the tobacco companies," recalls Kim Barnhill, Administrator in Jefferson and Madison County Health Departments in North Florida and a Liaison to the Community Preventive Services Task Force. "They were allowed to pass out free samples of their smokeless tobacco products at community events. We would see kids going through their lines multiple times to get these products. After two or three uses, the kids were hooked."

In response to these dire circumstances, Florida residents passed a constitutional amendment in 2006 requiring the state legislature to set aside at least 15 percent of their tobacco settlement funds to reduce and prevent tobacco use. The Florida Department of Health dedicated these funds, upwards of \$63 million, to implementing and maintaining *Tobacco Free Florida*, a comprehensive tobacco education and prevention campaign designed to reduce tobacco use.

Counties mandated to use evidence-based interventions

Tobacco Free Florida mandates counties to implement evidence-based interventions identified as effective in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs*, or in the *Community Guide*.

Ms. Barnhill and her team acted quickly to implement county-wide tobacco cessation and prevention campaigns—*Tobacco Free Jefferson* and *Tobacco Free Madison*. The team turned to the *Community Guide* to identify and support the following recommended interventions:

- Increasing unit price of tobacco products,
- Mass media campaigns when combined with other interventions, and
- Community mobilization when used with other interventions.



www.thecommunityguide.org

What is the *Community Guide*?

The Guide to Community Preventive Services (*Community Guide*) is an essential resource for people who want to know what works in public health. It provides evidence-based recommendations and findings about community preventive services, programs, and policies to improve health.

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force)—an independent, nonfederal, volunteer body of public health and prevention experts—bases its recommendations and findings on systematic reviews of the scientific literature. These reviews are conducted, with oversight from the Task Force, by scientists and subject matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in collaboration with a wide range of government, academic, policy, and practice-based partners.



Creating policy and mobilizing the community

The local health departments knew that in order to promote anti-tobacco messages and make it harder for people, especially minors, to get tobacco products, it would be critical to educate local elected officials about evidence-based policy changes. The health departments did this and successfully created policies that limited minors' access to tobacco products (e.g., by requiring tobacco products to be moved behind the counter; increasing the price of tobacco products). They then educated the community about the value of these new policies with local media campaigns.

Community mobilization was another key strategy in the local health departments' approach. They engaged youth in program activities by creating S.W.A.T. (Students Working Against Tobacco) teams to start peer-to-peer education and support groups in local schools. In addition, they contributed grant funds to create community-wide advisory committees to generate ideas and buy-in for county-wide anti-tobacco campaigns aimed at teens and adults. The committees, which continue to be active and include elected officials, school system representatives, health department staff, and health care professionals, leverage existing communication channels to advertise campaign messages, activities, and resources.

Smoking rates decrease dramatically

Tobacco Free Florida has been extremely effective in reducing tobacco use in its communities. Within the first four years of the campaign, the smoking rate for adults in Florida decreased by 18.6 percent and fell well below the national average.³ This reduction saved an estimated \$4.2 billion in personal health care expenditures. Additionally, the smoking rate among high school students decreased to 14.5 percent (approximately 3 points less than the national average), and the number of youth who promised to never smoke increased from 55 percent to 62.6 percent.

The statewide program and its county-level counterparts continue to make significant strides toward eliminating the economic burden of tobacco use on Florida's economy and improving the quality of life for residents. In 2010, the Jefferson and Madison County Health Departments received additional funding to create a faith-based initiative that will engage churches and ministers in promoting smoking cessation programs and resources to their congregations. The outcome of these combined efforts demonstrates that when counties champion evidence-based interventions, including those identified in the *Community Guide*, success is possible.

Lessons Learned

- **Making evidence-based interventions mandatory enables success.** Florida has seen marked success in addressing tobacco use and prevention by requiring *all* programs to be evidence-based. Health departments are comfortable proposing and implementing interventions known to be effective.
- **Identifying what works benefits the bottom line.** Implementing programs that have shown success is the best use of limited funds and resources. For Florida, the use of evidence-based interventions led to a multi-billion dollar savings.
- **Interpret the *Community Guide* at the level for which it will be used.** Summarize information provided in the *Community Guide* for decision makers. Individuals who set policy are unlikely to search the website. Rather, provide them with a straightforward summary to inform decision making.

¹Florida Department of Health. www.doh.state.fl.us/Tobacco/tobacco_home.html
Changes in Smoking-Attributable Mortality and the Economic Burden of Smoking in Florida from 1999 to 2009.
www.doh.state.fl.us/tobacco/PDF_Files/ChangesInFLSmokingAttributableMortality_EconomicBurden.pdf

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking Fact Sheet.

www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking

³Florida Department of Health. www.doh.state.fl.us/Tobacco/tobacco_home.html