

Title of Intervention: Tobacco Policy Options for Prevention

Intervention Strategies: Campaigns and Promotions, Environments and Policies

Purpose of the Intervention: To decrease adolescents' access to buying tobacco products

Population: Adolescents in rural communities

Setting: Seven rural communities in Minnesota; community-based, school-based

Partners: Local media, local government, citizens, merchants

Intervention Description:

- **Campaigns and Promotions:** The intervention followed a direct action community organizing model that called for mobilizing large numbers of people, encouraging individuals to take active roles as citizens and to hold leaders accountable for public decisions, highlighting conflicts between citizens' values and the status quo and using that conflict to move individuals to action. Teams conducted group presentations, letter and petition drives, media campaigns and tobacco purchase attempts with underage youth. Examples of these youth-orientated activities included tobacco forums, poster contests, youth productions of public service announcements and presentations by high-school-age youth to elementary school classes. Community awareness was heightened through letters to the editor and opinion columns. Local radio stations were used for public service announcements or for interviews of team members. In preparation for city council hearings, each team sent a mass mailing to 200 people urging calls and letters to council members and attendance at meetings. Key individuals and community groups were also targeted to write or call.
- **Environments and Policies:** Teams drafted their ordinance based on models from other communities, introduced the ordinance to their city council and then marshaled the support of community leaders and the public for their proposal. Team members and community supporters lobbied city councilors, met with tobacco retailers and attempted to obtain the support of law enforcement officials. Prior to the public introduction of their ordinances, strategy teams held meetings or conducted interviews with some of local tobacco merchants in order to determine what merchants were currently doing, learn individual merchants' openness to changes in how they sell tobacco and identify merchants who would present the strongest opposition to the intervention. There was personal contact with city council members, police chiefs, city managers and attorneys by distributing information packets, which typically included the draft ordinance, local data on teen tobacco purchase success rates and responses to commonly raised questions. All intervention communities passed ordinances aimed at reducing youth access to tobacco.

Theory: Community Organizing Model

Resources Required:

- **Staff/Volunteers:** Community organizers, community team members
- **Training:** Organizers were trained in community organizing, youth tobacco use and access and local government. The training program consisted of 2-day meetings every 10 weeks.
- **Technology:** Computer and software for community organizer
- **Space:** Meeting space
- **Budget:** Not mentioned
- **Intervention:** Petitions, letter, posters, presentation, lobby materials, educational material
- **Evaluation:** Surveys

Evaluation:

- **Design:** Randomized controlled trial
- **Methods and Measures:**
 - Student surveys assessed tobacco use, acquisition behaviors and perceptions about availability.

- To evaluate merchants selling to youths, tobacco purchase attempts were completed at all retail tobacco outlets in each community. Two purchase attempts were carried out at each business by two different 15-year-old buyers from outside study communities. Buyers and supervisors recorded data about the purchase attempt and the store environment, including location and types of tobacco displays.

Outcomes:

- **Short Term Impact:** By the end of the intervention period, all seven intervention communities had adopted a comprehensive ordinance aimed at youth access restrictions. The proportion of adolescents who attempted to purchase tobacco in the intervention cities declined while it increased in the control cities. However, both intervention and control communities showed reductions in businesses that sold cigarettes.
- **Long Term Impact:** The intervention resulted in a lower net prevalence of smoking.

Maintenance: The local policy change team planned and executed activities to raise community awareness about youth tobacco access and use and to develop and demonstrate broad support for policy change. Most policy change teams included an educator, a medical professional and at least two teenagers.

Lessons Learned: A community mobilization intervention resulting in policy adoption and enforcement to reduce youth access to tobacco can affect adolescent smoking rates.

Citation(s):

Forster, J. L., D. M. Murray, et al. (1998). "The effects of community policies to reduce youth access to tobacco." *Am J Public Health* 88(8): 1193-8.

Blaine, T. M., J. L. Forster, et al. (1997). "Creating tobacco control policy at the local level: implementation of a direct action organizing approach." *Health Educ Behav* 24(5): 640-51.