



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE STATE TOBACCO PREVENTION PROGRAM

The best way any state can substantially reduce smoking and other tobacco use is to establish a well-funded and sustained comprehensive tobacco prevention program that employs a variety of effective approaches.

Essential Components

Past experiences show that the following elements must all be included to maximize the success of any statewide program to reduce tobacco use. Conducted in isolation, each of these elements can reduce tobacco use, but done together they have a much more powerful impact.

Public Education Efforts: Research has demonstrated that tobacco industry marketing increases the number of kids who try smoking and become regular smokers. Not surprisingly, one of the best ways to reduce the power of tobacco marketing is an intense campaign to counter these pro-smoking messages. These efforts must include multiple paid media (TV, radio, print, etc.), public relations, special events and promotions, and other efforts. Counter-marketing efforts should target both youth and adults with prevention and cessation messages. Any restrictions placed on the strategies used in these efforts will only hamper effectiveness.

Community-Based Programs: Programs like The National Cancer Institute's ASSIST (American Stop Smoking Intervention Study) Project have demonstrated that community-based programs reduce tobacco use. Because community involvement is essential to reducing tobacco use, a portion of the tobacco control funding should be provided to local government entities, community organizations, local businesses, and other community partners. These groups can effectively engage in a number of tobacco prevention activities right where people live, work, play, and worship, including direct counseling for prevention and to help people quit, youth tobacco education programs, interventions for special populations, worksite programs, training for health professionals, and enforcement of local youth access ordinances. Criteria for eligibility and accountability must be established to ensure that community-directed funds are spent on the most effective efforts.

Helping Smokers Quit (Cessation): A comprehensive tobacco control program should not only encourage smokers to quit but also help them do it. In fact, most smokers want to quit but have a very difficult time because nicotine is so powerfully addictive. To help these smokers, cessation products and services should be made more readily available and more affordable. Moreover, treatment programs are most effective when they utilize multiple interventions, including pharmacological treatments, clinician-provided social support, and skills training. Cessation services can be provided through primary health care providers, schools, government agencies, community organizations, and telephone "quitlines." Staff training and technical assistance should be a part of all programs to treat tobacco addiction; and following the cessation guidelines from the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research will increase the effectiveness of any cessation efforts in clinical settings.

School-Based Programs: School-based programs offer a useful way to prevent and reduce tobacco use among kids, especially when based on the CDC's *Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction*. To operate most effectively, school-based programs must include curricula that have been shown to be effective, as well as tobacco-free policies, training for teachers, programs for parents, and cessation services. Students must learn not only the dangers of tobacco use but life skills, refusal skills, and media literacy in order to resist the influence of peers and tobacco marketers. It is also critical that the school programs be integrated with other community-based programs and with counter-marketing efforts.

Enforcement: Rigorously enforcing laws prohibiting tobacco sales to youth and limiting exposure to secondhand smoke is an essential element of creating an environment conducive to reducing tobacco use. These enforcement efforts should include hotlines for reporting violators, frequent compliance checks, penalties for violators, and compliance enhancing education. Studies show that reducing youth access to tobacco products can reduce use and that establishing smoke-free workplaces, schools, and public areas can both reduce the amount people smoke and even prompt many smokers to quit. To increase tobacco control enforcement, funds must be provided to enforcement agencies to make sure

other enforcement efforts are not compromised. Other agencies and organizations should also be supported to provide related educational efforts to raise awareness of the laws and their enforcement and to promote compliance.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Every element of a comprehensive tobacco control program should be rigorously evaluated throughout its existence. Programs should be based on available research and lessons learned from past efforts, and specifically designed to effectively serve their targeted audiences. Careful monitoring and evaluation methods should be built-into the programs to provide the data necessary for continual improvement. Process measures should be developed to monitor the activities conducted under the program from the outside, as well, in order to block the misuse of funds and promote their most efficient and effective use. And regular measurements of key outcomes should also be conducted to assess progress and further improve their performance. Through all this evaluation work, each and all of the elements of a state's tobacco control initiative can be adjusted and improved to ensure that tobacco use declines as quickly and sharply as possible.

Related Policy Efforts: This paper focuses on the key programmatic elements of a tobacco prevention and cessation program, but there are also additional policy initiatives that have been proven effective in reducing tobacco use -- especially as part of a comprehensive strategy. These policies, which can be undertaken at the state and local levels, include increases in cigarette excise taxes, restrictions on tobacco marketing to kids, increased penalties for selling tobacco to kids, and new restrictions on environmental tobacco smoke in public places.

Guiding Principles

Past experience with tobacco control efforts indicates that five principles should guide the development of a successful state program to prevent and reduce tobacco use:

- **It must be comprehensive.** Stopgap or partial measures will meet with only partial success. While research shows that a number of measures can reduce tobacco use, these elements work most effectively when they are combined in complementary fashion.
- **It must be well funded.** Unless properly financed, tobacco prevention will have little effect against the marketing efforts of the tobacco industry (over \$8 billion each year). The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued funding guidelines for state tobacco control programs, which can serve as a basis for planning.
- **It must be sustained over a long period of time.** While short-term attitudinal changes can occur relatively early, it will take years to achieve the significant behavioral and cultural changes necessary to reduce tobacco use substantially and maintain low levels. Reducing youth tobacco use by a third will only get us back to 1991 levels; thus, the effort must be a prolonged one. If tobacco control programs are not sustained over many years, the chances for success will be diminished, and any early gains may be lost in subsequent years. The early investment must be protected by sustaining the effort over time.
- **It must operate free and clear of political and tobacco industry influence.** History warns us that the tobacco industry will employ every manner of tactics to divert money from tobacco prevention and to interfere with any tobacco prevention efforts that are undertaken. To avoid this tobacco industry sabotage, new tobacco control programs must be set up to be independent of these influences and insulated from them.
- **It must address high-risk and diverse populations.** The needs of special populations can and must be taken into account in designing and disseminating the various elements of the tobacco control program.