

West Virginia

Joining Forces to Improve Tobacco Prevention Efforts

Problem Overview

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. Each year cigarette smoking accounts for approximately 1 of every 5 deaths, and each day approximately 3,600 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 years start smoking cigarettes. According to the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey results, among West Virginia high school students

- 59% had ever tried cigarette smoking.
- 28% currently smoked cigarettes.
- 50% of those who currently smoked had tried to quit.

Program/Activity Description

The state's Office of Healthy Schools (OHS), the Division of Tobacco Prevention (DTP), and the West Virginia Prevention Research Center (WVPRC) collaborated to apply evidence-based strategies to reduce tobacco use among youth. The OHS, supported in part by CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health, partnered with the DTP to

- Develop a Strategic Plan for Tobacco Prevention in Schools, based on CDC's best practices and school guidelines.
- Assist the WVPRC in developing Not-On-Tobacco (N-O-T)—conducted in all WV secondary schools and respected as the most widely used U.S. teen smoking cessation program.
- Develop and maintain the DTP-funded Regional Tobacco Prevention Specialists Network, resulting in strong tobacco prevention initiatives in all 55 WV school districts.

The OHS and DTP also combined forces with the American Lung Association of WV to create the statewide Raze program—an anti-tobacco youth movement that features more than 180 school-based groups involving more than 7,000 students. State policies support tobacco use prevention and require students to receive instruction on tobacco and potential health hazards from tobacco use in grades K–12.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Between 2008 and 2010, the percentage of West Virginia's secondary schools that prohibit all tobacco use at all times in all locations increased from 73% to 79%, according to the CDC's School Health Profiles survey. The percentage of high school students in the state who currently smoke cigarettes declined from 28% in 2007 to 22% in 2009.