

## Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

### Arkansas

#### **Passing the Clean Indoor Air Act Reduces Exposure to Secondhand Smoke**

According to the Surgeon General's report, "The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke," there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and even brief exposure can be dangerous. For example, nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home or at work increase their risk of developing heart disease (by 25–30%) and lung cancer (by 20–30%). Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces fully protects nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke. Furthermore, workplace smoking restrictions lead to less smoking among covered workers.

Information obtained from BRFSS data contributed to the April 2006 enactment of the Arkansas Clean Indoor Air Act, which prohibits smoking in all public places, including bars and restaurants, and in nearly all public and private workplaces. The Clean Indoor Air Act protects workers in nearly all public and private workplaces from secondhand smoke. It also ensures that children, senior citizens, and the general public can breathe smoke-free air in the public places they visit. Arkansas is the seventeenth state in the nation to pass a smoke-free workplace act.

According to 2007 BRFSS data, the smoking prevalence rate for adults in Arkansas was 22.4%, compared to 19.7% nationwide. This represents a decline in smoking prevalence since 2005, when 23.5% of Arkansans reported smoking. Arkansas-specific BRFSS data also showed that public support for smoke-free bans in public places, work areas, businesses and restaurants has been increasing, with 76.9% supporting such a ban in 2005. Data from the latest BRFSS demonstrate a decline in smoking among adults in Arkansas since the Act has been in effect. The Arkansas Clean Indoor Act, supported by BRFSS data, ensures that many more citizens in Arkansas will lead safer, healthier lives.

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### **New Mexico**

#### **Mandating Colorectal Cancer Screening Coverage to Save Lives**

Data show that screening for colorectal cancer lags far behind screening for other cancers. If caught in its early stages, people treated for colorectal cancer have a 5-year relative survival rate of 90%. As many as 60% of deaths due to colorectal cancer could be prevented if every person who is age 50 and older was screened regularly. Use of colorectal cancer screening is particularly low among those who lack health insurance, those with no usual source of health care, and those who reported no doctor's visits within the preceding year.

According to BRFSS data, New Mexico's colorectal cancer screening rates are 52.9%, which is below the national median of 57.1%. Citing BRFSS data, which showed that colorectal cancer screening rates were significantly better in states with mandatory coverage, New Mexico's Legislature passed a bill to address one barrier to screening: its cost. The law now requires health insurance providers to cover colorectal screening for New Mexico residents age 50 and older. New Mexico joins 22 other states with mandatory colorectal cancer coverage laws.

The availability of BRFSS data that demonstrated the positive impact of mandatory insurance coverage for colorectal cancer screenings prompted legislative change in New Mexico. With New Mexico law mandating that health insurance providers pay for this valuable screening, it can be expected that more of New Mexico's residents will get the recommended screenings, resulting in fewer colorectal cancer deaths overall.