

Public Health Practice Stories from the Field



28%

In 2010, Vanderburgh County, Indiana, had a higher rate of adult smokers (28%) than both the nation (18%) and Indiana (26%) as a whole.

Community coalition

Smokefree Communities of Vanderburgh County, consisting of 70 businesses and organizations, collaborated on two smoke-free workplace ordinance campaigns.

Smoke-free air

Vanderburgh County and the City of Evansville passed comprehensive smoke-free air ordinances for workplaces, restaurants, and bars.

95%

Fine-particulate air pollution in five county restaurants and bars declined by 95% 24 months after the smoke-free ordinance went into effect.

Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Rallies for Smoke-Free Air

In 2010, Vanderburgh County (population 179,703) had a higher incidence of adult smokers (28%) than both Indiana (26%) and the nation (18%) as a whole. This level of smoking contributed to a high incidence of smoking-related morbidity and mortality in the county and accounted for 30% (128 people) of the county's cancer deaths and 87% (117 people) of its lung cancer deaths.

The Vanderburgh County Health Department, working with Smokefree Communities of Vanderburgh County (a community coalition of 70 businesses and organizations), faced the daunting task of running two smoke-free workplace ordinance campaigns simultaneously—in Vanderburgh County and the City of Evansville, the county seat and third most populated city in Indiana. In November 2009, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH), with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, provided technical assistance on coalition building and comprehensive tobacco control strategies. This support rallied members around specific steps to repair flawed ordinances and gain renewed momentum for the coalition activities.

As a result of these collective community-wide efforts, smoke-free workplace ordinances were enacted in Vanderburgh County in 2011 and Evansville in 2012. Both ordinances were passed before a state smoke-free law went into effect on July 1, 2012.

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What We Did

The Vanderburgh County Health Department responded to a request for proposals developed by NACCHO and NALBOH and was subsequently selected. NACCHO and NALBOH held a planning call with health department staff members and a training session with invited coalition members. During the day-long session, NACCHO and NALBOH representatives trained participants on the components of a comprehensive tobacco control program and walked them through development of an action plan. The training also focused on developing local strategic plans, presenting information to the public to gain support and members, and using facilitation methods for coalitions and consensus. The Vanderburgh County Health Department led the effort, with support from the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, and American Heart Association.

NACCHO and NALBOH also facilitated an action planning meeting with 20 coalition members in November 2009. The meeting aimed to reinvigorate tobacco control efforts in the county and led to development of a strategy to pass a comprehensive smoke-free workplace ordinance in Evansville and Vanderburgh County. The target audience for the ordinance was all tobacco-smoking adults working and conducting business in Vanderburgh County.

What We Accomplished

- On February 22, 2011, county commissioners approved a comprehensive smoke-free air ordinance requiring public places and places of employment, including bars, restaurants, and membership clubs, to be smoke free. It also prohibits smoking within 10 feet of all smoke-free buildings. The county ordinance became effective on July 1, 2011.
- On April 1, 2012, the City of Evansville implemented a separate yet similar smoke-free air ordinance. It prohibits smoking in all public places and within 10 feet of any enclosed area where smoking is prohibited.
- A University of Southern Indiana study demonstrated the health benefit of Vanderburgh County's smoke-free air law. Using state-of-the-art air pollution monitors to measure the levels of fine particulate air pollution in five restaurants and bars in the county, researchers found a 95% decrease in indoor air pollution 24 months after the July 2011 Vanderburgh County smoke-free air ordinance went into effect.

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