

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND Tobacco Use Prevention

Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) is an initiative designed to make healthy living easier by promoting environmental changes at the local level. Through funding awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2010, a total of 50 communities are working to prevent obesity and tobacco use—the two leading preventable causes of death and disability.

“THE RHODE ISLAND TOBACCO CONTROL NETWORK (RITCN) IS DEFINITELY LOOKING FORWARD TO SUPPORTING THE COMPLETION OF THIS IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVE IN PROTECTING ALL PROVIDENCE RESIDENTS FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF NICOTINE ADDICTION AND COMMERCIAL TOBACCO USE.”

— Dr. Walter Harper, Director, RITCN

Community Overview

Providence, Rhode Island, is tackling tobacco use throughout the community. In Providence County, where Providence City is located, approximately 17% of adults are current smokers. Additionally, 18.9% of Providence high school students reported smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days. While the youth cigarette smoking rate is relatively low in Providence compared to the state rate, a problem exists with emerging products that are inexpensive and heavily marketed toward youth. With 19 middle and high schools and seven college campuses, youth are one of the city's largest population segments.



In Providence, smoking prevalence is significantly higher among low-income adults (22.9%) compared to higher-income adults (14.1%). Approximately 29% of the city's 171,909 residents live under the Federal poverty level. In addition to tobacco use prevention efforts aimed at Providence's entire population, certain initiatives target youth and low-income populations.

Community Successes

If healthy options are not available, then healthy living is not possible. With the support of the CPPW initiative, Providence has implemented a variety of changes throughout the community to make healthy living easier.

To decrease tobacco use, Providence:

- Supported the Providence Public School Board's decision to implement a tobacco-free policy in Providence Public Schools. As of December 2010, all schools districtwide are tobacco-free, preventing staff, students, and visitors from using all tobacco products on school property and at school-sponsored events. This change will limit exposure to secondhand smoke for more than 23,000 public school students and more than 1,600 staff.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



“THERE IS NO SAFE LEVEL OF EXPOSURE TO TOBACCO SMOKE AND NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEIR HEALTH AND WHERE THEY ARE GOING TO LIVE.”

— Stephen O’Rourke, Executive Director, PHA

Community Successes *(continued)*

- Increased fines and penalties among all 312 tobacco vendors throughout the city to decrease tobacco sales to underage youth and sales of single cigarettes or “loosies.” This effort will benefit an estimated 280,000 Providence youth.
- Developed a paid public awareness initiative to encourage tobacco cessation and discourage initiation of smoking and tobacco use. The campaign includes television and radio ads as well as bus signage. The television campaign alone was viewed by community members more than 3.2 million times.
- Launched a new *Tobacco-Free Providence* website, www.tobaccofreeprovidence.org. The site offers residents the opportunity to pledge to live tobacco-free, share their tobacco-free story, promote the initiative on Facebook, and watch campaign advertisements.

(The list above is a sample of all activities completed by the community.)

Providence Launches Tobacco-Free Public Housing

In April 2011, Providence Housing Authority (PHA) launched new tobacco-free housing in all five of the buildings for elderly and disabled residents. The policy states that residents and their guests can only smoke in designated smoking areas. This will enhance the health and safety of more than 2,000 residents. Under the *Tobacco-Free Providence* campaign, all uninsured PHA adult residents are offered free nicotine-replacement therapy as well as individual or group support classes, helping more Providence residents maintain a tobacco-free lifestyle.

Leadership Team

The leadership team includes high-level community leaders from multiple sectors, who have the combined resources and capacity to make healthy living easier. Members of Providence’s leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- City of Providence Mayor’s Office
- Four community-based organizations focused on tobacco-control issues
- Providence Community Health Centers
- Providence Police Department
- Providence Public Housing Authority
- Providence School Department
- Rhode Island Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals
- Rhode Island Tobacco Control Network
- State of Rhode Island Department of Health

Additional Information

For more information, please visit www.tobaccofreeprovidence.org.