

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



THE CHEROKEE NATION
Obesity and 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.

“OUR GOAL IS TO HAVE HEALTHY AND HAPPY PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITIES. THESE EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATIONS WILL HELP US BETTER ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.”

— Chad Smith, Former Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation

Community Overview

The Cherokee Nation, a nonreservation Tribal Jurisdictional Service Area located in Oklahoma and the surrounding areas, is tackling obesity and tobacco use throughout the community. Obesity-related diseases are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in this largely rural and low-income community of 115,731 tribal citizens. Approximately 66% of the Cherokee Nation population is overweight or obese, and roughly one in three children born in the community will become overweight or obese. Oklahoma also ranks as the 11th most obese state in the nation.

Tobacco use also is a serious health concern in the Cherokee Nation. Approximately 29% of adult tribal citizens are current smokers, and more than 12% use smokeless tobacco. Additionally, nearly 29% of high school students in the Cherokee Nation reported smoking a cigarette in the last 30 days. In addition to obesity and tobacco use prevention efforts aimed at Cherokee Nation’s entire population, certain initiatives target youth.

Community Successes

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

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, the Cherokee Nation:

- Established biannual chronic-disease screenings in the community to increase awareness among residents of their risk of chronic health problems and to educate them about prevention.
- Created relationships between schools and local farms through the farm-to-school program to promote healthy meals in school cafeterias and improve student nutrition.
- Improved the quality of physical education by requiring 150 minutes of physical activity per week in school systems.





Community Successes *(continued)*

- Began offering nutritious options in school vending machines to promote the consumption of healthy foods and beverages.

To decrease tobacco use, the Cherokee Nation:

- Supported Cherokee Nation schools and businesses in fostering smoke-free and tobacco-free environments.
- Referred community members to the 5 A's, an intervention program to treat tobacco use and dependence.
- Developed partnerships with organizations, such as the Northeast Regional Oklahoma Students Working Against Tobacco Abuse, to help educate community members about the dangers of tobacco use.
- Established regular smoking cessation classes. These one-hour courses are held over eight weeks to provide community members with support and resources, including nicotine-replacement therapy, to help them quit.

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

Cherokee Nation Launches Cherokee Challenge

The Cherokee Nation launched a new community-based education initiative, the *Cherokee Challenge*, to encourage individuals and families to eat healthy foods and exercise throughout the year. It offers a variety of activities and training tips for active living, and sponsors a series of races, fun runs, and walks in various communities, including a final challenge to race with Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chad Smith.

Cherokee Nation Reduces Residents' Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

The Cherokee Nation now requires all contractors working with the Cherokee Nation to be tobacco-free, including casinos, hotels and resorts, and other businesses. This will affect the community's approximately 2,400 contractors and vendors working both indoors and outdoors. This policy will help to ensure that more than 300,000 Cherokee Nation residents and visitors are not exposed to the dangers of secondhand smoke in their everyday lives.

"DIABETES EXISTS IN MY FAMILY ... I HOPE TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THE YOUNGER GENERATION BY EXERCISING AND EATING HEALTHY. I WANT THEM TO DO THE SAME."

— *Bobbie, Cherokee Nation resident*

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 the Cherokee Nation's leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Adair, Cherokee, and Mayes County Health Departments
- Cherokee Nation Behavioral Health Community Programs
- Cherokee Nation Communications Department
- Cherokee Nation Community Organization, Training, and Technical Assistance
- Cherokee Nation Health Department
- Cherokee Nation Health Services
- Cherokee Nation Natural Resources
- Cherokee Nation Roads
- Cherokee Nation Tribal Administration
- Oklahoma Fit Kids Coalition
- Sequoyah High School

Additional Information

For more information, please visit <http://healthynation.cherokee.org>.