

# SUCCESS STORY

## Kentucky

### *Everyone Wins as Kentucky Races Toward Reducing Exposure to Second-hand Smoke*

How long can you hold your breath if you live, work, or play in Kentucky? Kentuckians aim to clear the air statewide to reduce decades of one of the highest rates of tobacco use in the United States. The number of annual deaths because of smoking in Kentucky equals the number of residents in some counties and cities in Kentucky.<sup>1,2</sup> For example, the number of deaths because of smoking annually is approximately the same number as residents of Fulton County, Kentucky.<sup>1,2</sup> Although tobacco is no longer among the top five agriculture products for the state, some citizens and decision makers may still harbor the perception that they are still a “tobacco state.” Efforts to protect residents and visitors in Kentucky are underway, one community at a time. Currently, 34% of Kentuckians live, work, or play in municipalities with regulations requiring comprehensive smoke-free workplaces.<sup>3</sup> In fact, 34 municipalities have now passed smoke-free ordinances and 21 are comprehensive; prohibiting smoking in most workplaces, restaurants, and bars, including in 2 of the largest cities in the state—Lexington and Louisville.<sup>3</sup> What is being done to meet the challenge and change the environment so that all Kentuckians are the “odds-on favorite” to win the right to breathe clean air?

With funding support from Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW), the Kentucky state tobacco control program and Smoke-Free Kentucky have worked to promote an environment that supports saving lives and saving money by reducing exposure to second-hand smoke in workplaces, restaurants, and bars. Joining with partners these funds have enabled them to—

- Organize the Smoke-Free Kentucky Leadership Team.
- Hire a smoke-free coordinator who facilitates collaboration among partners and provides technical assistance to local communities on the dangers of secondhand smoke exposure.
- Conduct a 1-day, facilitated, working meeting with all partners.
- Hold the Smoke-free Kentucky Summit.
- The Smoke-Free Kentucky Coalition released data showing that—
  - 76% of Kentuckians believe that exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful.<sup>4</sup>
  - 67% of Kentuckians believe the right of customers and employees to breathe clean air in restaurants and bars is more important than the right of smokers to smoke or owners to allow smoking in these places.<sup>4</sup>

Secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard resulting in illness and death.<sup>5</sup> Comprehensive policies prohibiting smoking are highly effective in reducing exposure to secondhand smoke and do not have a negative economic impact on the hospitality industry.<sup>5</sup> The foundation has been laid in Kentucky by local departments of health and the State Tobacco Control Program for an environment supportive of the right to breathe clean air.



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