



January 14, 2011

Dear Colleague:

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States. An estimated 46.6 million people – about one in five adults in the U.S. – currently smoke. Each year, an estimated 443,000 people die prematurely from diseases caused by smoking or second-hand smoke exposure. Coupled with this enormous health toll is the significant economic burden of tobacco use, which is responsible for about \$100 billion per year in medical expenditures and another \$100 billion per year in lost productivity.

Reducing tobacco use is a winnable battle. With additional effort and support for evidence-based, cost-effective strategies that we can implement now, we will have a significant impact on our nation's health.

Further significant progress in tobacco control is possible. Strong state policies that protect nonsmokers from second-hand smoke, use of media to graphically show the human impact of smoking, well-funded tobacco control programs, and implementation of other key evidence-based policies will decrease the number of smokers and save lives.

CDC's *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs* concludes that if all states were to achieve and maintain CDC-recommended funding levels for five years, there would be approximately five million fewer adult smokers and that 500,000 fewer youth would start smoking.

CDC is committed to partnering with state, tribal, territorial, and local governments to prevent illness, injury, disability, and death. Together, we can substantially reduce tobacco-related disease and death.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
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