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Tobacco-Free Generation: Power for Creating Positive Change

It might be a surprise to see the annual Collegiate Smokeout manual in your NCAAW mailing, but why wait? Start planning your tobacco control programming now!

The Annual Event

Even if they do not focus on tobacco year-round, most campuses do some kind of promotion for the Great American Smokeout (the third Thursday in November).

This annual celebration encourages people who smoke to quit for a full 24 hours. If they are successful with that, they should try 48 hours, then 96, then a week, etc.

Quit attempts help people learn the process of quitting and move toward a tobacco-free life. The event encourages those who use tobacco to make a quit attempt, and to not think in terms of "success" or "failure", but to view the attempt as a valuable learning experience.

The Great American Smokeout is also a great time to conduct work related to tobacco policy. Here are some suggestions for making the most of the annual event.

Perform an informal assessment of your campus, including the culture, norms, values, policies, and general attitudes toward health of students, staff, and faculty. Peer educators can help collect information, as well as provide an invaluable perspective on campus life.

How is your current tobacco policy followed and enforced? How can students and staff easily obtain the policy? Is the policy outdated?

Study what cessation options are available, both on campus and in the community. How can those be promoted? How are they accessible to students? Faculty? Staff?

What materials are available that promote cessation resources? Can you hand these out during your events?

Is there a task force or committee currently addressing tobacco issues? Can you partner with them? If there is no such committee, consider starting your own task force. (See this year's or last year's Smokeout manuals for details.)

Use the Smokeout to remind people about current tobacco policies, as well to promote cessation resources.

For this year's campaign mailing, we have incorporated elements of the tobacco policy development process and interspersed it with case studies from campuses around the country that have implemented tobacco-free policies. Their lessons learned will be invaluable for other institutions (possibly yours!). We also have included updated

information on topics that are important for tobacco control such as descriptions of new tobacco products, details on the new FDA legislation (see side bar for an overview), and resources that may help your campus efforts.

Why Policy?

Population-based strategies are effective and are the most efficient use of funds and staffing. Policies, laws, and ordinances that restrict the use of tobacco products are currently the best way to protect people from the harms of secondhand smoke and to increase the number of people quitting tobacco. This is why BACCHUS now recommends that campuses engage in the policy advocacy process and move toward becoming tobacco free.

Using Your Manual

We suggest using this year's manual to develop a task force to guide your advocacy work. You may also use sections of the manual to teach your peer educators about policy development and meaningful event planning. This is a valuable skill, not just in tobacco control or health promotion, but also as a citizen.

Peer educators are crucial components of the process. They can lead events to help build support. They can promote policy change on social networking sites. They can gather valuable assessment data and information. They can communicate directly with other students on a daily basis. Most importantly, students will help shift the attitudes and norms of the campus as a whole.

We wish you the best of luck in your policy efforts. Truly, there is no better way to make so much positive change in health outcomes.

For more ideas, visit tobaccofreeU.org

Did You Know?

- Number of tobacco-free colleges and universities¹: 147
- Percentage of U.S. population with²:
 - 100% smoke-free workplace laws: 56.5%
 - 100% smoke-free restaurant laws: 64.8%
 - 100% smoke-free bar laws: 53.6%
 - 100% smoke-free workplace, restaurant, and bar laws: 40.3%
 - Any 100% smoke-free laws: 70.8%

Sources:

1. American Lung Association of Oregon, smokefreeoregon.com/college/, July 1, 2009.
2. Americans Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation, no-smoke.org, July 1, 2009.