



For Embargoed Release on:
Friday, September 14, 2001

NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:
Jana Kettering
Public Information Officer
801-538-6639

2001 Report Shows Department of Health Making Progress Against Tobacco

(Salt Lake City, UT) - The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) today officially released the first annual report of tobacco prevention and control activities funded through the State Tobacco Settlement Account. The results have encouraging implications for the health of Utahns.

The UDOH's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program works with its many partners throughout the state to utilize evidence-based interventions designed to prevent youth from starting to use tobacco, motivate and help youth and adult smokers to quit smoking, decrease tobacco-related medical costs, and reduce premature death and disease related to tobacco use. In the past year, many significant system changes were implemented.

- The unique Utah Teen Quit Line was developed to provide telephone cessation counseling to more than 1,200 Utah teens and parents.
- Medicaid now covers cessation services, counseling, and medications for pregnant women who smoke, potentially saving thousands of dollars in health care costs for low-birth weight babies born during the next year.
- An enhanced media campaign now reaches youth, adults and pregnant women who smoke with messages targeted specifically to their needs and concerns.
- The Truth About Tobacco TV ads reached 95% of Utah youth and 83% of Utah adults.
- More than 35,000 Utah children received tobacco prevention education through school and community activities.
- In addition, thousands of smokers were able to receive cessation services previously unavailable.
- All 12 Local Health Departments provided comprehensive tobacco prevention and control services to local communities.

Results highlighted by the report include:

- 43% of teens who participated in extensive telephone counseling reported quitting, and 96% of those who quit were confident that they would remain non-smokers.
- Ongoing compliance checks, retailer education, and legal action ensured that violations of the state law against tobacco sales to minors remained below 20%.
- Utah has the highest rate of smoke-free worksite policy coverage (89.3%) in the U.S.

- MORE -

Respondents to the Truth About Tobacco media survey say that due to anti-tobacco ads:

- 65% of youth smokers and 54% of adult smokers had reduced the number of cigarettes smoked.
- 66% of youth smokers and 55% of adult smokers had made a quit attempt.
- 53% of youth smokers and 76% of adult smokers had smoked less around other people.

School surveys from 5th-8th graders who completed tobacco prevention curricula show that:

- 94% of 5th-8th graders report that they will not try tobacco products in the next year.
- 91% of 5th-8th graders believe that smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day would place them at moderate to great risk for physical harm.

The teen cessation group program Ending Nicotine Dependence was delivered to more than 500 court- and school-referred students:

- 20% of students reported quitting after completing the program.
- 58% of those who had not quit had reduced their daily cigarette smoking.

“Tobacco prevention and control is one of our top priorities. We are delighted to see progress being made in the fight against the devastating effects of tobacco,” said Rod Betit, Executive Director, UDOH.

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) received additional funding for expansion of tobacco prevention and control activities through the State Tobacco Settlement Account, provided by the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), the landmark legal settlement in which tobacco companies agreed to compensate states for the damage their products have caused. Tobacco is the leading cause of death in Utah: almost 13% of Utah adults (more than 180,000 people) (BRFSS 2000), and approximately 11.9% of Utah high school students are current smokers (YRBS 1999). It is estimated that 1 in 3 will die prematurely due to their tobacco use. Additionally, Utah incurs more than \$180 million in annual smoking-related medical costs (CDC State Highlights 2001).

Tamara Lewis, MD, MPA, MPH, Chair of the Tobacco Advisory Committee, said “We look forward to expanding our efforts in the coming year. Tobacco use places a huge burden on our state and we are committed to reducing that burden, and making a difference for the better in the lives of Utahns.”

The report was prepared by the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, Utah Department of Health and the Social Research Institute at the University of Utah. The Social Research Institute at the University of Utah served as the independent evaluator of this project. Copies of the report can be obtained by calling Claudia Bohner, Research Consultant to the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, at 801-538-9274 or by visiting http://www.health.state.ut.us/html/press_releases.html