



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Kids Against Tobacco to March to State House

For Immediate Release: Jan. 26, 2010
Media Contact: Communication Office
802-863-7281

MONTPELIER - Each of the 51 Vermont Kids Against Tobacco (VKAT) groups from Vermont will participate in the bi-annual State House Rally in Montpelier on Jan. 27. The event celebrates youth empowerment and the success throughout 2009 of VKAT programs in reaching more than 21,000 Vermonters with tobacco prevention and education activities.

"To me, VKAT means a way of showing that kids ARE against tobacco - it gives us a voice and a chance to work on leadership skills," said Kira Hislop, from Lakeview Union School in Greensboro. "My family supports my participation and encourages me to take a stand when something is important."

Thousands of youth have taken part in VKAT since it began in 1995, and their efforts have resulted in consistently lower smoking prevalence rates at schools. A decline in the smoking rates happens more quickly and earlier in schools with a VKAT presence.

VKAT is a statewide initiative for students in fifth grade through eighth grade, and has grown from 10 to 51 schools over the past 15 years. Participants in VKAT, with help from guidance counselors, student assistance professionals (SAPs), teachers, school nurses and community organizations have worked together to help decrease smoking rates among Vermont's youth. According to the Health Department's 2009 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, seven percent of eighth graders smoked one or more cigarettes during the past 30 days. Overall, smoking rates for Vermont youth have been cut in half during the past decade.

"The Vermont Kids Against Tobacco members are dedicated to informing their peers about the risks of tobacco use," said Health Commissioner Wendy Davis, MD. "We have to continue to encourage a new generation of Vermonters to make healthier choices, like being smoke-free."

Today, following breakfast with their legislators and a brief presentation by Chittenden Representative Bill Frank and Rebecca Ryan, director of Health Communications & Policy for the American Lung Association, the students will march from Main Street Middle School to the State House. Governor Jim Douglas, Lt. Governor Brian Dubie and legislators have been invited to join them on the House floor to answer questions.

Members of VKAT will then present testimonials about the anti-tobacco activities they have organized over the past year at their respective schools.

The VKAT program is sponsored by the Vermont Department of Health, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For more information about VKAT, go to www.goVKAT.org.

###

Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374
||||| [Web Browser](#)

