

# Tobacco Control Program 2014 Community Prevention Summary

## TOBACCO PROGRAM GOALS:

- Reduce adult smoking rate to 12 percent.
- Reduce youth smoking rate to 10 percent.
- Reduce secondhand smoke exposure.
- Maintain low rate of other tobacco product use.

## INSIDE:

Reducing  
Secondhand Smoke

Addressing Tobacco  
Marketing to Youth

Success Stories

Statewide Media  
Campaign

## Investing in Tobacco Prevention



The Vermont Department of Health Tobacco Control Program provides assistance to community-based organizations and coalitions. In state fiscal year 2014, the Health Department invested \$760,000 of Vermont's Master Settlement Agreement dollars back into local communities by funding 16 community

coalitions at levels ranging from \$40,000-\$55,000.

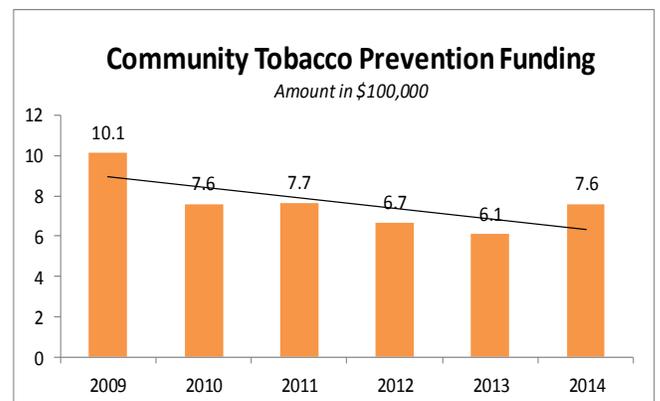
With support from the Health Department's 12 district offices, youth advocates and other public, private, and nonprofit partners, coalitions successfully promoted smoke-free environments, educated about the retail environment's impact on tobacco use, and amplified the Health Department's mass reach communication campaigns.

The Vermont Tobacco Control Program provided regular technical assistance to build and guide

community prevention efforts. In FY2014 the program hosted 16 technical assistance calls and two in-person trainings, in addition to one-on-one assistance from program staff and the Center for Public Health and Tobacco Policy. Coalitions learned how to use stories from their work to create compelling narratives about tobacco data, how to build community support for changing the tobacco retail environment, and strategies for marketing techniques in the world of digital media.

## Community Prevention Sustainability

Vermont's community-based efforts for tobacco prevention are funded by Master Settlement Agreement dollars. In FY2014 and FY2015, prevention funding was at 75 percent of FY2009 levels. The Health Department is exploring models for community prevention sustainability.



# Reducing Secondhand Smoke



Promoting smoke-free spaces not only protects nonsmokers from harmful toxins, it also helps current smokers to quit and stay smoke-free by shifting social norms concerning tobacco use and reducing triggers.

In 2014, work on smoke-free housing shifted from the state level to the community level. By July 2014, there were over 150 smoke-free public housing buildings in Vermont, covering approximately 3,500 residents. Public housing authorities in Barre, Bennington, Brattleboro, Burlington, Montpelier, Rutland, Springfield, Winooski, and the Vermont State Housing Authority now have smoke-free buildings, in addition to other smoke-free housing through the Housing Trust of Rutland County, Rural Edge, and the Central Vermont Land

Trust. Reducing exposure to dangerous secondhand smoke in the home improves community health.

Last fiscal year there was also a significant movement in creating tobacco-free college campuses with the University of Vermont announcing its plan to become tobacco-free. Local coalitions have been supporting this work in collaboration with a number of state colleges, including Castleton State, Johnson State, Lyndon State and Vermont Technical College. Community College of Vermont, New England Culinary Institute, St. Joseph's College, and St. Michael's College have also assessed interest on campus or held tobacco cessation classes.

## Success Stories: Changing Tobacco Policies

**The Winooski Coalition for a Safe and Peaceful Community** worked closely with the **Winooski Housing Authority on a tobacco-free policy** that went into effect in August 2014. Coalition Director Kate Nugent provided ongoing outreach and education, assistance drafting the policy, enforcement materials, and positive promotion in the press. She also partnered with the Health Department to provide tobacco-free signages free of charge.

**The Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition** focused on large businesses going tobacco-free in the St. Albans Industrial Park. Amy Brewer, coalition coordinator, helped **Superior Technical Ceramics in going tobacco-free**, joining the ranks of **Ben & Jerry's, Barry Callebaut and Technor Apex**. The key to success was tobacco-free worksites at neighboring businesses. Superior Technical Ceramics also partnered with Blueprint for Health to offer cessation classes for employees.

In April 2014, with support from Cathy Hazlett of **Health Connections of the Upper Valley**, the Hartford Select Board amended its alcohol and drug-free **policies for parks and town property to include lit tobacco products**. The updated policies included properties in Quechee, White River Junction, Hartford, West Hartford, and Wilder. In 2013, Cathy helped the town of Sharon adopt a similar policy.

# Addressing Tobacco Marketing to Youth

The tobacco industry spends \$19 million in Vermont annually to market its products – that’s approximately \$19,000 per tobacco retailer. Tobacco marketing is more influential than peer pressure on youth smoking, and 90% of new tobacco users are under age 18 (U.S. Surgeon General 2012 and 2014 reports).

To counter the industry’s influence, coalitions have been working on addressing industry marketing, tobacco retailer location, and youth access to tobacco – all of which contribute to youth tobacco initiation. One important change in 2014 was the end of the Healthy Retailer program, which started in 2012, as the initiative required substantial staff time without a significant impact on the tobacco environment. Ending Healthy Retailers allowed for refocusing resources toward community education on point of sale advertising, price promotion and product placement.

Tobacco prevention coalitions have made steady progress educating communities on the impact of tobacco point of sale, with a focus on the use of power walls to normalize tobacco and advertise. Coalitions have also helped with outreach around new licensing requirements for e-cigarette retailers when Vermont law changed in the summer of 2013. Community and youth groups notified the Department of Liquor Control of e-cigarette retailers operating without a tobacco license so the Department could target them for education.




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*“The Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition presents regularly at retailer trainings. It’s a great opportunity to educate retailers on tobacco advertising and its impact on youth tobacco use.”*

*-Cassandra Holloway, Coalition Director*

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## Success Story: Limiting Outdoor Tobacco Ads

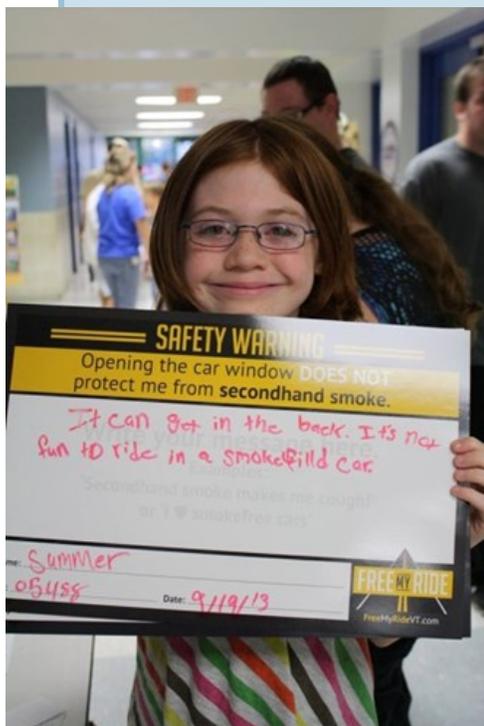
**The Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Prevention Coalition** at Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital succeeded in helping **St. Johnsbury to reduce exterior tobacco and alcohol advertising**. The town adopted a zoning ordinance requiring that no more than 20% of the total area allowed for signage can advertise tobacco or alcohol products. Derby already had a similar ordinance and an enforcement sweep in spring 2014 reduced the amount of exterior tobacco ads. The **Healthworks ONE coalition** is now working on a similar strategy to increase enforcement in Newport. Reducing outdoor ads protects youth from tobacco advertising, as well as helping small towns to maintain their historical character and cultural integrity.

# Statewide Media Campaigns

In the rapidly changing world of media and mass reach health communications, the Health Department rolled out a new approach to statewide anti-tobacco media campaigns in FY2014. For community groups, this means depending on their networks to maintain strong social marketing around tobacco use and new types of engagement campaigns.

The Health Department assists local campaign activities with tailored materials to better use social media, garner earned media, and build upon local and regional relationships. A toolkit for community groups released in spring 2014 focused on tobacco's impact on Vermonters with mental illness and other addictions. The toolkit provided a recommended calendar in addition to social media shares, outreach to local treatment centers, and ideas for garnering earned media for tobacco-free treatment centers. The new model has increased consistent messaging and earned media activities.

## Success Story: “Free My Ride”



What began as a request from the Health Commissioner's office to educate Vermonters about smoke-free cars, became a powerful form of community engagement that positively influenced the adoption of smoking restriction in cars with children.

Working with Vermont's community and youth coalitions, the "Free My Ride" campaign focused on illustrating concern around children's secondhand smoke exposure in cars. From spring 2013 through spring 2014, coalition members and youth advocates surveyed over 1,400 Vermonters and collected over 100 photos of Vermonters supporting smoke-free cars. The "Free My Ride" Facebook page garnered more than 450 likes and campaign posters provided a platform to communicate with pediatricians statewide. It also informed legislators on the risks of secondhand smoke in cars, making way for the July 1, 2014 legislation restricting smoking in cars with children under the age of 8.

For more information about tobacco prevention in Vermont, visit [www.healthvermont.gov](http://www.healthvermont.gov) or email [tobaccovt@vermont.gov](mailto:tobaccovt@vermont.gov)