



NORTH CAROLINA SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION

NC SOPHE Advocacy Priority #5 2016-2017

Why is Tobacco Prevention So Important in North Carolina?

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable deaths in North Carolina, taking the lives of more than 14,000 annually. By investing in comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs, we can save lives, protect youth and ease the heavy financial burden of tobacco use on the citizens of our state.

- 1. 1 in every 5 deaths and 1 in 3 cancer deaths in North Carolina are related to tobacco – (US Surgeon General’s Report 2014, American Cancer Society, JAMA Intern Med).***
- 2. Annually, tobacco use costs our state \$3.81 billion in healthcare costs, including \$981 million in Medicaid costs and \$293 million in health costs due to secondhand smoke. (CDC Best Practices, 2014, CTFK 2015.)***
- 3. Tobacco use among North Carolina youth has increased primarily due to e-cigarettes, small cigars, hookahs, and flavored vaping products. In 2015, youth tobacco use was 27.6%; most alarming was the 888% increase in electronic cigarette use among youth from 2011-2015 (YTS 2015). E-cigarette use poses a significant - and avoidable - health risk to young people in the U.S., increasing the possibility of addiction and long-term harm to brain development and respiratory health. Its use has also been associated with use of other tobacco products (dual use) (US Surgeon General 2016) (<https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/knowtherisks.html>).***
- 3. Evidence shows that raising the price of tobacco products is the most effective way to reduce tobacco use, particularly among youth. Currently NC is ranked 47 of 50 states in the U.S. in tobacco tax at 45 cents per pack, \$1.26 less than the national average, now at \$1.71 per pack. (Center for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK), 2017).***
- 4. North Carolina invests just 3.3% of the CDC’s recommended investment of \$10.53 per smoker (ALA, 2017). A study published in the journal Contemporary Economic Policy found that adequately funded state tobacco-prevention programs could save an astonishing 14 to 20 times the cost of implementing them. These programs save money by reducing tobacco-related Medicaid and other medical costs and productivity costs (CTFK, 2015).***

QuitlineNC remains severely underfunded, reaching just 1.6% of smokers, despite the finding that 61% of smokers in NC report trying to quit smoking on their own. (CDC, Tobacco Branch, 2017).

What can legislators and others do to support tobacco prevention in North Carolina?

- 5. Invest more in statewide tobacco control programs by continuing to restore funding needed to support youth tobacco prevention, QuitlineNC and tobacco-free environments.***
- 6. Increase cigarette taxes by \$1.00 per pack to reduce the number of youth who become addicted to cigarettes and will result in an increase of \$400 million annually in NC.***
- 7. Rely on reputable organizations, such as NC SOPHE, the NC Alliance for Health and the North Carolina Public Health Association to keep them informed about evidence-based approaches to tobacco prevention.***
- 8. Support efforts to make all college campuses in North Carolina tobacco-free, making it easier for smokers to quit, saving our universities vital funds and supporting a healthier workforce (TFCCI, 2015).***

9. *Continue to protect the existing smoke-free restaurants and bars law, in effect since January 2, 2010, and consider expanding the law to include all public places and private worksites. (SmokeFree.NC.gov, 2015)*
10. *Support funding the infrastructure to allow Raising the Minimum Legal Sale Age for tobacco products to 21, as research indicates this would save lives and reduce medical costs to our state (CTFK, 2015, <http://tobacco21.org/critical-issues/>)*

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