

Impact Of Connecticut's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Efforts

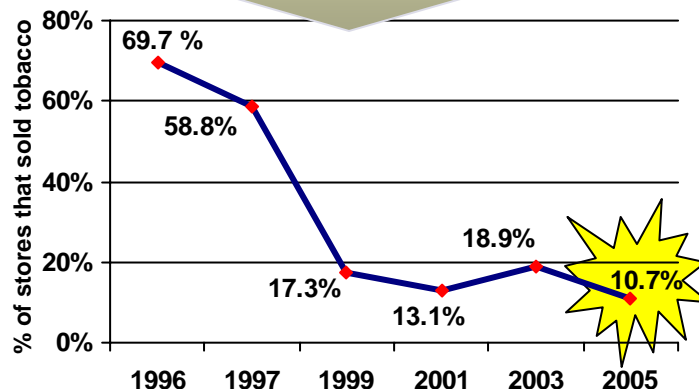
In the spring of 1997, DMHAS initiated Connecticut's **Tobacco Prevention and Enforcement Program (TPEP)** in which young people employed by DMHAS attempt to purchase cigarettes from retailers all across CT. If they are successful in making a purchase, corrective action is taken to discourage the offending merchants from future sales to minors. TPEP, with its state and community partners, the Departments of Revenue Services and Public Health, the Attorney General, and local police departments, have had outstanding success in reducing underage youth access to tobacco. During 2005, Connecticut TPEP partnered with local Regional Action Councils, local law enforcement, and state police to maintain and improve its effectiveness.

DMHAS Tobacco Prevention Activities

In addition to conducting random, unannounced inspections of retailers and sending results to the Dept of Revenue Services for enforcement action, DMHAS:

- produces and distributes educational and awareness materials for retailers, youth, parents and communities
- funds statewide mini-grants to support tobacco prevention
- maintains a hotline, (877) 331-1999, to answer questions on youth tobacco prevention effort.
- conducts a Merchant Education and Awareness Campaign, **Selling Tobacco to Minors Doesn't Make "Cents,"** in which informational mailings are sent to all licensed tobacco retailers. Eighty-four percent (84%) reported that the information was helpful or very helpful to them and their staff
- promotes compliant vendors through commendation letters and award ceremonies.

The impact of TPEP's efforts can be seen in the overall drop in the percentage of sampled retail stores that sold tobacco products to youth – **from 69.7% in 1996 to 10.7% in 2005.**



At the same time, **data on cigarette smoking show a six-year decline in individuals 12 and older.** The most recent statistics on tobacco use among Connecticut's youth show that **12%** of 7-8th graders and **22%** of 9-10th graders are current cigarette smokers, down from 41.7% and 59.8% respectively since 1997.

The impact of smoking on youth:

- ➔ Teens who smoke are three times more likely than nonsmokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine. Smoking is associated with a host of other risky behaviors, such as fighting.
- ➔ More than a third of all kids who ever try smoking a cigarette become regular, daily smokers before leaving high school.
- ➔ More than 6.4 million children under age 18 alive today will eventually die from smoking-related disease, unless current rates are reversed.
- ➔ Almost 90 percent of adult smokers began at or before age 18.

Sources: CDC, *State Highlights 2004*; *National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2003*; Arday DR, et al. *Cigarette smoking and self-reported health problems among U.S. high school seniors, 1982-1989*; 2000 *Student Survey*; 2002 *Youth Tobacco Survey*; 2003 *Adult Household Survey*.



Why these efforts?