

Tobacco Health Disparities Update

News from the Washington State Department of Health
Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

Volume 34, Issue 2

November 2008

Culturally sensitive health communications key to success

Health communications, including paid and earned media, promotional products, and educational materials, has been identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as an essential component of successful tobacco prevention and control programs. Addressing tobacco-related disparities requires that health communications be done in ways that are sensitive to the unique culture, history, geography, and social environment of each community or population.

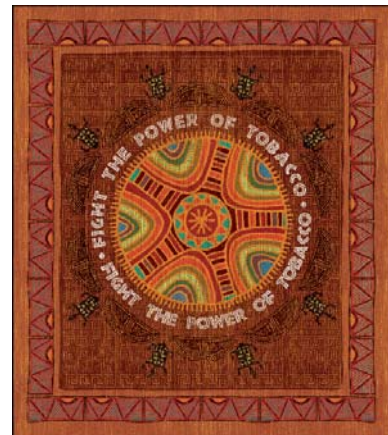
Since 2003, the Washington State Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (Tobacco Program) has worked with priority communities to develop materials and approaches that can be effective in diverse communities.

Developing culturally and linguistically appropriate materials

“One-size-fits-all” approaches can be effective with general audiences, but are frequently ineffective in racial, ethnic, tribal, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender communities.

As the Tobacco Program has expanded its efforts to address disparities, it has partnered with its cross-cultural community contractors in the African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino, Lesbian/Gay/ Bisexual/Transgender, Urban Indian, and tribal communities to develop a variety of culturally appropriate public awareness and educational materials.

Outreach materials have included flyers, postcards, magnets, hand fans, rubber bracelets, and other promotional items. In addition, specialty kits were developed for some communities: a quit kit for the African-American community included mint and toothpick boxes, dog tags, and a quit journal; and a clinic kit for the Urban Indian community included a cessation brochure, poster, and flyer.



The materials have been used at community events, such as the Inter-Tribal Canoe Journey, Seattle Pride Festival, and International District Summer Festival, and as part of paid media campaigns, such as transit signage.

The program has adapted its youth involvement training curricula for Teens Against Tobacco Use and SpeakOut for American Indian and Latino communities, and recently worked with its cross-cultural and tribal contractors to develop eco-friendly shopping bags (image above), emblazoned with culturally and linguistically appropriate cessation and secondhand smoke messages.



Data forms the foundation

In its new strategic plan, the Tobacco Program decided to prioritize outreach to populations with the highest rates of tobacco use. As part of this planning process, the Tobacco Program has produced two groundbreaking reports: the 2007 *Adult Smoking Rates in Washington: A Report on Current Disparities and Disparities in Youth Tobacco Use in Washington State*. These reports contain data gathered from both state and national surveys and are intended to help inform decisions about program, material, and media efforts.

The Tobacco Program also conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with members of two cross-cultural communities, lesbians and African-American men, in Seattle and Spokane. Important insights gained from this study include:

- Secondhand smoke and family are important themes and motivators for African-American men.
- Lesbian participants seemed unaware of the industry targeting and smoking statistics in their community.
- Lesbians and African-American men shared commonalities such as their reasons for smoking, their motivations to quit, and their wariness of being “called out” by those outside their community.

Media work targets low socio-economic status population

Poverty and low education levels are common factors among nearly all populations that experience high rates of tobacco use.

To help address this issue, the Tobacco Program’s 2008 cessation media campaign targeted elements of the existing *Cold Turkey* campaign and messaging to reach smokers of lower socio-economic status – specifically blue- and pink-collar workers, those working the late shift, and the unemployed.

Television ad coverage was increased during the evening hours when many blue-collar workers end their shifts, and during daytime when many unemployed workers may be at home watching TV. Additionally, grassroots messaging and materials was provided to specific counties where higher smoking rates and lower socio-economic conditions co-exist. Materials included matchbooks, gas pump toppers, transit interior signs, Laundromat signs, messaging on electronic dartboards, and dumpster wraps (behind businesses where smokers congregate).



In a related effort, the Tobacco Program is sponsoring Spanish-language radio ads promoting the national cessation campaign, *BecomeAnEX*. This fall, about 1,800 spots will air in areas of the state that have the highest populations of Latinos. The Tobacco Program is also distributing *Become An EX* “fotonovelas” (a picture book in both Spanish and English) to community and migrant health clinics, Tobacco Program contractors, and through its materials clearinghouse.

In addition, the Tobacco Program supports a variety of efforts targeting pregnant women who smoke – especially low-income women – through its three-year-old *Quit for You Quit for Two* campaign.

Media policy directions

The Tobacco Program's most recent strategic and media plans place additional emphasis on reaching low-income smokers. This high-risk population represents 40 percent of Washington smokers and has a smoking rate about twice the rest of the adult population.

Proposed elements of a new cessation media campaign include:

- Development a central cessation message – perhaps using protection of family members from secondhand smoke as a call to action – that works across racial and ethnic populations.
- TV, radio, print, and online ads that would run January through July 2009, and collateral materials that are tied to the central theme but are culturally tailored for specific populations.
- Development of materials to market the free nicotine replacement patches and gum available through the Washington Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW).
- Graphics that represent different racial/ethnic populations and the potential use of personal testimonials.

Integration of chronic disease and tobacco efforts

Chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are among the most prevalent, costly, and preventable of all health problems. These diseases often share related risk factors, including poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and use of tobacco products. The Tobacco Program is exploring a variety of new initiatives related to tobacco use and chronic disease, including a health communications campaign in tribal communities.

The program is contracting with the Western Tobacco Prevention Project of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, to develop a public awareness and educational campaign, titled "Steer Clear of..." Campaign materials will highlight the link between chronic disease and tobacco use – using Native American imagery and messages.

Posters, window clings, fact sheets, PowerPoint presentations, and other as-yet undetermined materials intended for American Indian audiences will be distributed through tribal chronic disease programs and clinics, tribal tobacco coordinators, and others.

For more information, contact Terresa White, Western Tobacco Prevention Project, at 503-416-3272 or twhite@npaihb.org.

For more information about the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program's efforts to address disparities, visit www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/disparities/disparity.htm.

