



Buncombe County Health and Human Services

Public Health ~ Adult & Children's Protective Services ~ Economic Services & Work Strategies
Parks, Greenways & Recreation ~ Human Resources, Services Support & Finance

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January 24, 2013

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News Release

New CDC Report Provides Wealth of New Data - Highlights Reasons to Sustain Tobacco Control Programs

NC ranks 29th for adult smoking and 26th for youth tobacco use

A new CDC report released today shows how each of the 50 states and DC is faring in implementing proven strategies that reduce tobacco use, such as comprehensive smoke-free policies, hard-hitting media campaigns, higher prices on tobacco products and access to cessation services. The CDC's *Tobacco Control State Highlights 2012* shows 21.8% of North Carolina adults smoke, ranking 29th among the states. The report further shows that 17.7% of North Carolina youth are smoking, ranking 26th among the states. Nationally, 19 percent of adults and 18.1 percent of high school students still smoke; confirmation that, despite enormous progress, smoking declines have slowed in recent years.

Eight states raised their cigarette excise taxes a total of nine times since the last report was issued in April of 2010, and five states passed comprehensive smoke-free laws since then. However, that represents a significant slowdown in state legislative activity on tobacco control that took place earlier in the decade. For example, from 2000 until the last *State Highlights* report in 2010, 22 states enacted comprehensive smoke-free policies.

"Youth smoking rates in North Carolina are now below the national average, thanks to the state's teen tobacco prevention program that was funded by the Health and Wellness Trust Fund during the past decade," said Gibbie Harris, Buncombe County Health Director. "Community based programs are one key factor in the success of reducing teen tobacco use in NC. Since the funding was cut in North Carolina in 2010, these tobacco use rates are likely to increase."

Smoke free laws save lives and save money in North Carolina. Since the passage of the statewide Smoke-free Restaurants and Bars Law went into effect January of 2010, heart attack rates have decreased 21%. This decline in heart attacks represents nearly \$5 million in health care cost savings. Secondhand smoke is a known trigger for other health conditions like asthma, stroke, and chest pain, and is a major risk factor for lung cancer, the state's leading cancer killer

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"Even after significant progress in reducing tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure in the last decade, much more work needs to be done to end the tobacco use epidemic," said Tim McAfee, MD MPH, Director of the Office on Smoking and Health. "There is excellent research that clearly identifies what needs to be done to eliminate tobacco use. States can accelerate their efforts to save lives and reduce tobacco-related health care costs."

The purpose of the highlights report is to provide tobacco control programs in the 50 states and the District of Columbia with valid, reliable, state-specific data about the high-impact, cost-effective strategies they are currently using or could be implementing as well as measures to track their progress. The CDC's report also confirms that while the nation has made enormous progress in reducing smoking, smoking declines have slowed in recent years.

Each year, approximately 443,000 people die from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and another 8.6 million suffer from a serious smoking-related illness. Moreover, annual costs associated with tobacco-related illness amount to nearly \$96 million in medical expenses, \$97 million in lost productivity, and 5.1 million years of potential life lost in the United States annually.

To get help quitting smoking, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit www.smokefree.gov. To access the *State Highlights* report, visit www.cdc.gov/tobacco, and for additional state-specific tobacco-related data, visit CDC's State Tobacco Activities Tracking and Evaluation System at <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/statesystem>. Also, visit www.BetobaccoFree.gov for information on quitting and preventing children from using tobacco.

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