



Position Paper

Tobacco Prevention and Control in the California Community Colleges

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A Position Paper on Tobacco Prevention and Control in the California Community Colleges

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable and premature death, accounting for an estimated 443,000 American deaths in the United States each year or one out of every five deaths.¹ These deaths are due to preventable conditions such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, and lung diseases including emphysema, pneumonia, and chronic airway obstruction.² The Health Services Association of California Community Colleges (HSACCC) is interested in educating and promoting services to assist tobacco users in quitting tobacco as well as abolishing secondhand smoke on campus.

In order to counter the negative effects of tobacco on the college population, in 2011, the American College Health Association (ACHA) has recommended all colleges and universities adopt a 100% tobacco-free campus policy.³ Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has created a Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative to promote and support the adoption and implementation of tobacco-free policies at institutions of higher learning.

As of July 2013, approximately 1,178 colleges in the United States are 100% smoke-free and 793 campuses are 100% tobacco-free.⁴ In California, an increased number of public colleges are becoming completely tobacco-free. In January 2012, the University of California (UC) Office of the President announced that all UC-owned property would be completely tobacco-free by January, 2014.⁵ More recently, the California State University (CSU) Office of the Chancellor has announced its intention for a tobacco-free system within the near future.⁶

At this time, the California Community College system has the unique opportunity to create 100% tobacco-free environments in all community colleges and make California the first state in the nation to make all public institutions of higher education free of tobacco. This action will discourage young adults from starting to use tobacco and decrease tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure on community college campuses.⁷

“More than 80% of adult smokers begin smoking by 18 years of age with 99% of first use by 26 years of age. In addition, adolescent smokeless tobacco users are more likely than nonusers to become adult cigarette smokers. Adolescents and young adults are uniquely susceptible to social and environmental influences to use tobacco, and tobacco companies spend billions of dollars on cigarette and smokeless tobacco marketing.” – Dr. Thomas Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Background and Rationale

Smoking Prevalence

- California has the second lowest rate of adult cigarette smoking in the United States.⁸ In 2010, 11.9% of adults reported smoking, down from 13.1% in 2009.⁹
- Among age groups, 18-24 year olds have the highest rate of smoking in California (14.6%), down from 17.6% in 2008.¹⁰

Decrease Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

- The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found secondhand tobacco smoke to be a risk to public health and has classified secondhand smoke as a group A carcinogen, the most dangerous class of carcinogens. The California Air Resources Board has categorized secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant, the same category as diesel exhaust.¹¹
- Most recently, the Surgeon General of the United States concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke and establishing smoke-free environments is the only proven way to prevent exposure.¹²

Tobacco-Free Policies Change Tobacco Use Behavior

- Tobacco-free campus policies are proven to decrease current smoking prevalence in students, decrease the amount of cigarettes used by those who continue to smoke, positively influence students' perceptions of peer smoking, change social norms around tobacco use, and increase favorable attitudes towards regulation of tobacco. These findings are consistent with a study that found that college students who lived in smoke-free residences were more likely to be nonsmokers.¹³

Promote Student Success

- Historically, most tobacco users started smoking or using smokeless tobacco before the age of 18. Over the last ten years, this pattern of new addiction has been changing. A recent study found one-fifth of smokers reported starting after the age of 18. Among individuals who started using tobacco before 18, regular or daily smoking was not established until the ages of 20 or 21.¹⁴
- As students graduate, they are transitioning into tobacco-free environments. In California, the majority of hospitals and K-12 campuses are 100% smoke-free or tobacco-free. Nationwide, worksites, college campuses, health care centers, and outdoor recreational facilities are adopting comprehensive tobacco use policies.

Eliminate Tobacco Litter on Campus

- Cigarette waste is extremely toxic to our environment. Cigarette butts contain the same toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke. The small filter, when wet, releases thousands of toxic chemicals back into the environment. These filters and chemicals are washed into waterways by water runoff.¹⁵
- By eliminating tobacco litter, colleges are also decreasing fire risk on campus, decreasing the cost and time associated with cleaning up tobacco litter, and increasing campus beautification.

Position Statement

Therefore, we the Health Services Association California Community Colleges shall work to establish multi-faceted campus-based efforts to create 100% tobacco-free environments including:

1. Comprehensive, enforceable policies that prohibit tobacco use on college property and protect the campus community from secondhand smoke exposure.
2. Access to evidence-based tobacco cessation programs.
3. Building campus-based educational campaigns utilizing research to illustrate normative practices of non-tobacco users.
4. Educating local governing boards to employ and enact comprehensive district policies within all California Community College Districts prohibiting the use of tobacco and nicotine products not regulated by the FDA for cessation purposes at any time in all buildings owned or leased, on college campuses or any district property, and in any college or district vehicles. This includes, but is not limited to: cigarettes, cigars, pipes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew, clove cigarettes, hookah and other nicotine-delivery devices, such as electronic cigarettes.
5. Encouraging placement of tobacco-free signage at all entrances to district and college properties.

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- ⁶ California State University Office of the Chancellor. (2013). Letter to the CSU Academic Senate. Accessed from www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Resolutions/co_response/documents/CO_Response_January_2013.pdf.
- ⁷ Seo, D.C., Macey, J., Torabi, M., & Middlestadt. (2011). The effect of a smoke-free campus policy on college students' smoking behaviors and attitudes. *Preventive Medicine*, doi:10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.07.015.
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