

Smoke-Free and Tobacco-Free Community College Grant Initiative

Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the leading cause of premature and preventable death responsible for over 480,000 deaths annually in the United States. Research also shows that there are dire health consequences for non-smokers, too. Secondhand smoke exposure causes cancer and cardiovascular disease as well as other diseases, and is responsible for more than 41,000 deaths in the U.S. each year. With 99 percent of smokers starting before age 27, college campuses are critical platforms for preventing young adults from starting tobacco use, aiding those current tobacco users in quitting, and reducing exposure to secondhand smoke.

Why Community Colleges?

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched an effort – Tobacco-Free College Campus Initiative (TFCCI) to promote and support the adoption and implementation of tobacco-free policies at institutions of higher learning. Support for 100 percent smoke-free and tobacco-free policies on college campuses has skyrocketed in recent years. The number of colleges and universities with 100 percent smoke- or tobacco-free policies tripled from 446 campuses in 2010 to 1,475 campuses in 2016.¹ Much of that progress has been achieved by four-year universities.

Community colleges in the U.S. serve almost half –46 percent- of the undergraduate students in the U.S. With enrollment of nearly 13 million students, community colleges serve as an entryway to higher education for many students of color, in addition to low-income and first-generation college students.² Community Colleges have a great opportunity to be at the forefront of advancing the health of their respective campus communities, including students, faculty, and staff.

About the Initiative

In October 2014, Truth Initiative launched a competitive mini-grants program aimed at enhancing the capacity of public community colleges to develop, adopt, and implement 100 percent smoke- or tobacco-free campus policies. Grant funds and technical assistance provided by Truth Initiative support efforts toward adopting a 100 percent smoke- or tobacco- free campus policy. Through two prior rounds of grants, Truth Initiative is currently partnering with 54 community colleges across 25 states.

¹ Americans for Non-Smokers' Rights website. Accessed Jan 24, 2016. <http://www.no-smoke.org/goingsmokefree.php?id=447>

² American Association of Community Colleges. 2015 Fact Sheet. January 2015.