

10-year smoking trend shows significant decline in Colorado

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

According to a report released recently by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Colorado's cigarette smoking rate has significantly declined from 1998 through 2007.

The CDC analyzed data from the 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey and found that smoking prevalence decreased in 44 states including Colorado—which decreased from 22.8 percent in 1998 to 18.7 percent in 2007.

Despite declines in smoking rates during this period of time, cigarette smoking continues to cause large numbers of deaths and disease.

“The deaths of approximately 4,400 Colorado men and women are attributed to smoking each year, at an estimated cost of 1.3 billion dollars,” said Ned Calonge, chief medical officer at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. “This downward trend in smoking prevalence shows that Colorado is certainly heading in the right direction, but we must continue to implement effective strategies that are proven to work—not only to save lives but to reduce the exorbitant health-care costs related to tobacco.”

According to the CDC, the only way to achieve substantial reductions in tobacco use in all states is to implement comprehensive, evidence-based tobacco control programs. Although Colorado ranks ninth in the nation in tobacco control spending, it meets only 50 percent of the recommended funding level for tobacco cessation efforts.

Jason Vahling, director of the State Tobacco Education & Prevention Partnership at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, said, “The significant decline in smoking over the past 10 years is great news for Colorado. This trend can be attributed to implementing effective strategies of a comprehensive program, such as implementing smoke-free policies; supporting ‘quit lines’; and conducting media campaigns that encourage quitting use of tobacco, preventing youth from starting to smoke and educating the public about the dangers of secondhand smoke.”

Increasing the unit price of tobacco products may be a smoking

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deterrent. On April 1, the federal tax on cigarettes will increase by 62 cents. According to national research, this could increase the motivation for smokers to try to quit and decrease smoking prevalence in the long term.

Another outcome of Colorado's comprehensive tobacco control program is a significant decline in cigarette pack sales - from 76 packs per capita per year in 1998 to 46.3 packs per capita per year in 2008. The national per capita consumption rate is 63.4 annually.

The Colorado QuitLine provides tobacco users with a free telephone coaching service and a free supply of the nicotine patch. Quitting can save the average Colorado smoker \$1,800 per year. The Colorado QuitLine gives people a valuable service that has been proven to work.

To contact the QuitLine, call 1.800.QUIT.NOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit www.coquitline.org for web-based cessation tools. The Colorado QuitLine is operated by National Jewish Health under contract to the State Tobacco Education & Prevention Partnership at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. QuitLine coaches are available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.