

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Tobacco Prevention Information for Teachers and School Staff

The initiation and development of tobacco use by children occurs in five stages (Surgeon General's Report, 1994). First, positive attitudes and beliefs are formed. This is followed by trying, experimenting with and regularly using tobacco. The last stage of this process is addiction.

Students experience a variety of pressures to use tobacco products. Usually sometime in middle or high school, students become enticed by the idea of smoking or chewing tobacco. Peer pressure and media play a large role in influencing a student's decision to use tobacco. Given the well-documented side effects of using tobacco products, prevention efforts at school provide an opportunity to decrease student exposure and use of tobacco.

Teachers and school staff can play a pivotal role in tobacco prevention by learning more about initiatives that already exist. The Centers for Disease Control and prevention has excellent resources related to youth tobacco use and prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/>). In addition, the Center for School Mental Health maintains a long-standing commitment to organizing tobacco prevention initiatives aimed at school-aged youth (http://csmh.umaryland.edu/partner_proj/tobacco/index.html).

Why do we care?

In Maryland...

About 50 - 60 youth in Maryland will begin smoking each day, replacing the longtime smokers who either quit or die.

Nearly one out of three Maryland youth are regular smokers by age 17.

12,200 youth (under 18) become new daily smokers each year in Maryland.

270,000 Maryland youth are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

More Maryland children alive today will die from tobacco use than from any other single cause - including AIDS, alcohol, accidents, murders, suicides, illegal drug use and fires combined.

As the number one killer of Marylanders, tobacco use robs us of over 7,700 family members and costs our economy over 1.5 billion dollars each year.

The annual health care cost in Maryland directly caused by smoking is over \$1.5 billion.

When compared to their developmental peers:

- Students who use tobacco products are more likely to develop lung cancer.
- Students who use tobacco products have a greater risk of obesity.
- Students who use tobacco products have a greater risk of developing old-age dementia.
- Students who use tobacco products have a greater risk of developing an array of heart diseases.
- Students who use tobacco products have greater difficulty performing in aerobic activities.

What can we do about it?

- **Learn the school policy on smoking.** If the policy works, learn ways to enforce it without intimidating students who already smoke. If the policy does not work, talk to teachers or administrators about it. If there is no policy, bring this issue up at the next PTA meeting.
- **Post tobacco prevention literature in your classroom.** Check out some of the links below and read about the different campaigns to combat youth smoking. Ask school administrators if it would be possible to post these anti-smoking advertisements throughout the school.
- **Present the facts.** Ask school clinicians to present on the adverse effects of using tobacco products. If your school does not have a mental health professional on staff, contact the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance for more information on tobacco prevention initiatives. Members of the management team can provide insight and guidance on this topic.
- **Engage students in conversations about their views on tobacco products.** Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids provide guided information on how to present tobacco prevention and cessation information in a classroom setting. Use these lesson plans to empower students and to show them they can live above the influence of tobacco.
- **Make the news real.** Cut out newspaper advertisements or print them off the Internet to help students critique the media's role in promoting tobacco use. Try to find ways to incorporate this in your discussion of topics centered on reproductive health and athletic performance.

Helpful Forms and Handouts:

- AACAP Facts for Families
 - *Tobacco and Kids:* <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/68.htm>
- Center for Disease Control:
 - *Benefits of Quitting:*
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr_2004/consumerpiece/page8.htm.
 - *Fact Sheet:* http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/research_data/youth/Youth_Factsheet.htm
 - *Tobacco Free Sports:*
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/youth/educational_materials/sports/00_pdfs/tobacco-free_sports_playbook.pdf
 - *Youth Tobacco Cessation Guide:*
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/how_to_quit/00_pdfs/IQuit.pdf
- Center for School Mental Health:
 - *Tobacco Prevention Resource Packet:*
http://csmh.umaryland.edu/resources.html/resource_packets/download_files/tobacco_prevention_2002.pdf

Additional Resources

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. (2006). <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/>

Schwartz, W. (1997). Smoking prevention strategies for urban and minority youth. *ERIC/CUE Digest, 120*. New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/1998-1/smoking.htm>

*Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.