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National Report: NH Ranks Last in Protecting Kids from Tobacco

CONCORD - The New Hampshire Comprehensive Cancer Collaboration (NH CCC) voiced its dismay this week when a nationwide study revealed that New Hampshire is tied for last in the nation in funding programs to prevent kids from smoking.

According to a national coalition of health care associations – including the American Cancer Society and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids – it is the third consecutive year in which New Hampshire has provided zero funds for tobacco prevention and cessation programs.

“Here in New Hampshire, most of our tobacco-free coalitions have already been eliminated through lack of funding,” said Kate McNally, an NH CCC board member who serves as Program Coordinator with the Cheshire Coalition for Tobacco-Free Communities. “Even with the Tobacco Master Settlement money and tobacco tax revenues in New Hampshire – a total of \$264 million – none of those funds are finding their way to the large, underserved population in New Hampshire that would benefit from tobacco prevention and control programs.”

The new national report, titled “A Broken Promise to Our Children; The 1998 Tobacco Settlement 13 years later,” also noted that “New Hampshire took another step backward in the fight against tobacco by approving a 10-cent reduction in the state’s cigarette tax,” thereby “making cigarettes more affordable and appealing to kids.”

Joining New Hampshire at the bottom of the national list are Connecticut, Nevada, Ohio and the District of Columbia.

“Between its failure to fund tobacco prevention and the cigarette tax reduction, New Hampshire is one of the most disappointing states in the nation when it comes to fighting tobacco use,” said Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

“To make progress,” he added, “New Hampshire’s leaders should raise the cigarette tax and increase funding for tobacco prevention. Even in these difficult budget times, tobacco prevention is a smart investment that saves lives and saves money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs.”

McNally of the NH CCC pointed out that 20.8 percent of New Hampshire’s high school students are smokers, and an additional 1,700 kids take up smoking each year.

“This lack of funding is keeping our youth smoking rate at dangerously high levels,” she said, “and it is preventing us from reducing the number of people who die every year from tobacco use.”

The New Hampshire Comprehensive Cancer Collaboration, a program managed by the Foundation for Healthy Communities, was established in 2004 to address one of the leading causes of death in NH. The NH CCC developed the New Hampshire Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan to address the following priorities: preventing cancer by creating environments that support a healthy lifestyle, increasing early detection of cancer through screening, improving the treatment of cancer and quality of life for people living with cancer, and reporting on the latest cancer research. For more information about the NH CCC and the NH Cancer Plan, visit www.NHCancerPlan.org.

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