

Tobacco Control Activities Reaching Health Disparity-Affected Populations

In Colorado and across the Nation, 10 populations have been identified as bearing a greater burden of the tragic effects of tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure. Multiple factors contribute to this, including limited access to quality health care, greater targeting by the tobacco industry, and higher prevalence of tobacco use. These populations include African-Americans, Latinos/Latinas, Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, people in treatment for substance abuse, people in treatment for mental illness, people with disabilities, spit tobacco users, the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community, and persons with low socioeconomic status. **Primary contacts:** Ed Ellis (spit tobacco, substance abuse) – 303-275-7565, ejellis@jeffco.us; Alma Sandoval (Latino community other communities of color) – 303-275-7566, asandova@jeffco.us; Jeremy Vann (LGBTQ youth) – 303-275-7556, jervann@jeffco.us.

Quarter 2 – Highlights of Accomplishments

- We have launched the Tobacco-Free Behavioral Health Forum for substance abuse and mental health treatment providers as a means to reach these providers with information and resources to integrate tobacco cessation as part of the treatment process. On November 12, the first Forum was attended by over 50 people who came to hear Dr. Libby Stuyt present on Nicotine Dependence as a True Addiction. The Forums are intended to support these providers in addressing tobacco with patients/clients and staff, and to address agency policies, including strategies to adopt smoke/tobacco-free campus policies. Over half of the recent attendees requested technical assistance to begin integrating tobacco control strategies into their programs.
- Staff continues to provide technical assistance and training to providers of mental health and substance abuse treatment programs as well as to providers of services for people living with disabilities. Trainings have included addressing tobacco use and promoting cessation with these special needs populations, addressing SHS exposure with consumers, etc. During quarter 2 the opportunities for providing training and technical assistance has grown significantly due to the initiation of the Tobacco-Free Behavioral Health Forum.
- Through participation on a state-wide steering committee, PACT (People Assessing Chew Tobacco), our program has begun to identify issues around spit tobacco use in our County. Initial qualitative information collected in multiple communities suggests increased spit tobacco use among specific groups and in specific regions in the state. We have begun planning two activities to increase community awareness about the prevalence of chew tobacco usage in Jefferson County and what can be done to combat this growing problem.
- We worked with a community health initiative, Live Well Wheat Ridge, to coordinate tobacco control efforts to reach low SES and Latino families in Wheat Ridge.
- Volunteers helped staff informational booths at health fairs as part of an outreach effort with high priority populations. Estimated reach: 470.
- Two LRCCAT (Latino Regional Community Coalition About Tobacco) meetings have been held in collaboration with Denver and Tri County Health Departments to prioritize tobacco control goals for the Latino community in Jefferson County and develop a work plan.
- We were successful in getting articles published in local Spanish print media outlets in the Denver Metro Area to raise awareness about tobacco cessation resources, increase quit attempts and raise awareness about the importance of increased protections from SHS exposure, especially among children and populations with tobacco-related health disparities. Estimated reach: 183,400.
- On October 9, 2008 students participating in their schools' gay/straight alliances (GSA) were trained in tobacco-related strategies to combat the tobacco industry's targeting of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth. Students from two high schools, JCOS and Green Mountain, participated, though contact with sponsors from GSAs at ten other high schools is expected to result in future trainings and activities.