



Unfinished Business: Realizing the Promise of Tobacco Control in Nevada

Over the past two decades, Nevada has made considerable progress in reducing the toll of tobacco use and nicotine addiction. Much of this progress can be attributed to the implementation of evidence-based tobacco control measures, such as smoke-free workplace laws, increased tobacco taxes, hard-hitting public education campaigns, prevention services and programs that encourage and help tobacco users to quit. Despite these accomplishments, nearly one in five adult Nevadans still smoke, one in ten Nevadans are exposed to secondhand smoke in the workplace, and efforts to prevent youth tobacco initiation and use are compounded by the emergence of new tobacco products such as electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes.

This Nevada Tobacco Prevention Coalition (NTPC) Fact Sheet – *Unfinished Business: Realizing the Promise of Tobacco Control in Nevada* – highlights progress and achievements in tobacco control in Nevada over the past twenty years, as well as current challenges faced by local and state health authorities and agencies on the front lines of tobacco control in the Silver State. Finally, it takes stock of the unfinished business of tobacco control by providing information on the current public health and financial impact of tobacco use in Nevada. *Unfinished Business* underscores the need for increased investments in evidence-based tobacco control measures commensurate with the current public health toll of tobacco in Nevada.

Progress in Tobacco Control in Nevada

- Since 1998, Nevada has received annual payments totaling approximately \$672 million as a result of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), negotiated between state attorneys general and the major tobacco companies to compensate states for taxpayer money spent on tobacco-related health care costs. A very small percentage of the annual MSA payments represents the principal source of funding for tobacco control programs in Nevada each year.
- Tobacco-related funds have been effectively used by local and state public health agencies to implement evidence-based interventions, such as youth prevention programs, the statewide tobacco quit line, and

hard-hitting media campaigns on the risks of cigarette smoking, tobacco use, and secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure.

- In fiscal year 2016, Nevada was expected to receive an estimated \$187.8 million in revenue from cigarette and other tobacco products taxes (as forecast by the Nevada Economic Forum) and \$40 million from the annual MSA settlement payment. Despite the enormous burden of tobacco use on Nevada residents and taxpayers, Nevada will only use \$1 million of tobacco-generated funds (0.4%) on tobacco control in fiscal year 2016.
- Major milestones in tobacco control include an increase in the cigarette tax from 35 to 80 cents per pack passed by the Nevada legislature in 2003 and another increase in the cigarette tax from 80 cents to \$1.80 per pack passed by lawmakers in 2015. Raising cigarette taxes is an effective tobacco control strategy associated with reducing youth initiation and increasing quit rates among current smokers.
- In 2006, Nevada voters approved the Nevada Clean Indoor Air Act (NCIAA). Despite exemptions for the gaming areas of casinos, tobacco retail stores, tobacco-related trade shows, strip clubs, brothels, and 21-and-over bars, the NCIAA has resulted in a major expansion in smoke-free workplaces, restaurants, and indoor establishments, and a substantial reduction in the number of children, workers, and non-smokers exposed to SHS and the health risks associated with SHS. This expansion of smoke-free laws has also resulted in the steady “de-normalization” of smoking in workplaces and public settings.
- Over the past two decades, the implementation of evidence-based tobacco control interventions by public health agencies, increases in cigarette taxes, and the expansion of clean indoor air laws have been responsible for substantial reductions in youth and adult smoking rates in Nevada. Adult smoking prevalence has declined from 31.5% in 1999 to 16.9% in 2014. Similarly, youth smoking prevalence has dropped from 33.0% in 1999 to 7.2% in 2015.

Challenges to Tobacco Control Efforts in Nevada

In spite of steady progress in reducing adult and youth cigarette smoking and tobacco use, Nevada will spend less than one cent of every dollar in tobacco-generated funds to fight the scourge of tobacco in our state. MSA settlement money, which is the funding source for the Fund for a Healthy Nevada (FHN), is the sole source of funds for tobacco control programs. However, tobacco control funding has remained flat at \$1 million annually since 2013, when the Nevada State Legislature restored funding after those funds were diverted in 2010 to alleviate state budget shortfalls.

At its peak prior to 2010, the FHN allocated more than \$4 million annually to tobacco control programs. Tobacco tax revenue, a logical funding source for tobacco control, has never been used in that manner. It has always been, and remains, deposited into Nevada’s general fund and used for the operation of State government rather than for funding tobacco control efforts.

As stated, in fiscal year 2016, the State of Nevada was expected to receive an estimated \$227.8 million in funds from the MSA and tobacco tax revenue. And, as stated, Nevada will spend only \$1 million on programs such as those to prevent kids from using tobacco and help tobacco users quit this year – a figure well below the annual funding level of \$30 million recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to implement a comprehensive tobacco control program in Nevada.

The emergence of e-cigarettes and similar products has added significantly to the challenges faced by tobacco control advocates. Just like existing tobacco products, e-cigarettes impact individual health, public health, and economic policy. With the exception of a prohibition in Nevada on selling e-liquid containing nicotine to minors, prior to August 8, 2016 e-cigarettes were an unregulated industry. Claims made by manufacturers and retailers didn't require peer-reviewed analysis, independent laboratory testing, adoption of industry best practices or the application of other quality control/quality assurance standards.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently implemented a final rule extending its authority to regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products, thereby providing a level of federal oversight that protects consumers. However, Nevada faces additional challenges, including issues involving clean indoor air laws, taxation, and a comprehensive prohibition on sales to minors.

Unfinished Business of Tobacco Control in Nevada

Despite considerable progress made by members of the NTPC and other tobacco control advocates, tobacco use continues to cause substantial harm in Nevada. The unfinished business of tobacco control in Nevada includes:

- 7.2% of high school students smoke cigarettes and 8.6% of male high school students smoke cigars
- 26.1% of high school students use e-cigarettes
- 1,500 children under the age of 18 will become new daily smokers this year
- 3.1 million packs of cigarettes will be bought or smoked by Nevada children this year
- Nearly 17% of adults, or 377,600 Nevadans, currently smoke
- 4,100 adults will die this year as a result of their own smoking
- 41,000 Nevadans under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking
- \$1.08 billion will be spent this year on health care costs directly caused by smoking

- \$148.9 million will be spent this year by the Nevada Medicaid program on health care costs caused by smoking
- Nevada taxpayers' annual state and federal tax burden from smoking-caused government expenditures is an estimated \$739 per household
- Smoking is responsible for an estimated \$1.09 billion in lost productivity this year
- The tobacco industry will spend \$80.3 million this year marketing cigarettes and other tobacco products – by comparison, only \$1 million will be spent on tobacco control efforts this year

Realizing the Promise of Tobacco Control in Nevada

Fortunately, we know what works to reduce smoking and prevent tobacco use. Effective, evidence-based tobacco control actions include:

- Increasing the unit price of cigarettes and other tobacco products by raising excise taxes at the state and federal levels
- Hard-hitting media campaigns and health communication interventions, such as the CDC's "Tips from Former Smokers" campaign
- Targeting tobacco control efforts towards adolescents, young adults, and populations with high smoking rates, such as low-income groups, the least educated, and those with mental health and substance abuse diagnoses
- Improving access to proven tobacco cessation counseling and medication treatments by reducing client out-of-pocket costs for such therapies
- Implementing "Tobacco 21" policies that prohibit the sale of any tobacco products to persons under 21 years of age
- Extending comprehensive smoke-free indoor air protections to all Nevadans in all workplaces
- Fully funding comprehensive tobacco control programs in Nevada at levels recommended by the CDC

Unfortunately, tobacco industry marketing outguns combined county and state spending on tobacco control in Nevada by a ratio of 78 to 1. The U.S. Surgeon General puts matters even more bluntly: "The root cause of the

smoking epidemic is evident – the tobacco industry aggressively markets and promotes lethal and addictive products, and continues to recruit youth and young adults as new consumers of these products.”

Given the toll of tobacco use in the Silver State, the time has long since passed to realize the promise of tobacco control programs and redirect tobacco-generated funds toward the considerable unfinished work of tobacco control that remains in Nevada. Moreover, what is past need not be prologue. Nevada policymakers have an opportunity to right these wrongs and, in doing so, save lives and save money by reducing the human toll and financial burden of tobacco use in our state. Acting together, we can end the scourge of tobacco in our state and improve the health of all Nevadans.

Data Sources and Additional Information

- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>.
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, “Broken Promises to Our Children: A State-by-State Look at the State Tobacco Settlement 17 Years Later.” <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/microsites/statereport2016/>.
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, “The Toll of Tobacco in Nevada,” http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/nevada.
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, “Tobacco Settlement Payments to the States,” https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/fact_sheets/policies/settlements_us_state/payments/.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “State Tobacco Revenues Compared with Tobacco Control Appropriations – United States, 1998-2010.” MMRW 61:20:370-374. (May 25, 2012) <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/mm6120.pdf>.
- Nevada Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). <http://dhs.unr.edu/chs/research/yrbs>.
- Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/index.htm>.

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The Nevada Tobacco Prevention Coalition is a partnership of public health professionals, medical associations, community coalitions, non-profit organizations, local and state health districts, academic institutions, and other health advocates and volunteers working to improve the health of all Nevadans by reducing the burden of tobacco use and nicotine addiction. More information at www.TobaccoFreeNV.org