

Date: September 9, 2015

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For Immediate Release

Helping Youth Stay Tobacco-Free in the New School Year

According to the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 11.8% of Michigan high school students currently smoke cigarettes, 6.9% use smokeless tobacco, and 10.7% currently smoked cigars. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids notes that there are 10,300 new youth smokers each year in Michigan, and 213,000 kids alive today in Michigan will eventually die from tobacco-related disease. In addition, according to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, e-cigarette use among U.S. middle and high school students tripled from 2013 to 2014. Current e-cigarette use among high school students increased from 4.5 percent in 2013 to 13.4 percent in 2014, and among middle school students, current e-cigarette use more increased from 1.1 percent in 2013 to 3.9 percent in 2014.

“Although we have made significant progress in protecting our youth from tobacco-related health harms, we still have a long way to go,” stated Kelley Mapes, Community Health Educator. “Far too many of our children are still using tobacco and are being exposed to the health harms from secondhand smoke exposure. Fortunately, there are a lot of proven methods that we know can help to prevent tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure among our kids.”

In 2012, the tobacco industry spent over \$308 billion to market their products in Michigan. Much of that marketing reaches young people. The U.S. Surgeon General concluded that more than 80% of underage smokers choose brands from among the top three most heavily advertised, and the more young people are exposed to cigarette advertising and promotional activities, the more likely they are to smoke.

Also, according to the U.S. Surgeon General, youth are sensitive to nicotine and can feel dependent earlier than adults. Nearly 9 out of 10 smokers start smoking by age 18, and because of nicotine addiction, about three out of four teen smokers end up smoking into adulthood, even if they intend to quit after a few years.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified evidence-based policy changes that are effective in reducing youth tobacco use and preventing young people from becoming tobacco users. These include tobacco-free policies, increasing the price of tobacco, mass media campaigns, and sustained, well-funded tobacco prevention and control programs. The CDC recommends that Michigan dedicate \$110 million annually to comprehensive tobacco control programming. Michigan spends just \$1.5 million per year.

“As our community heads back to school, we will continue to work on the evidence-based strategies identified by the CDC,” stated Kelley Mapes, Community Health Educator. “In addition, there are some concrete steps that parents can take to help their child stay tobacco-free. Providing a tobacco-free example and home environment, and talking frequently with children about tobacco can help protect kids.”

For young people who have already begun to use tobacco and want to quit, the Michigan Tobacco Quitline provides services for Michigan youth of any age. Young people can call the Quitline at 1-800-784-8669 or 1-800-QUIT-NOW and receive free telephone counseling to help them quit tobacco. In addition, the Quitline offers a free text messaging program and a self-guided online program to help youth quit tobacco. The Smokefree Teen website available at <http://teen.smokefree.gov/> provides tools to help young people quit.

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