

ISSUE REPORT

Investing In America's Health:

A STATE-BY-STATE LOOK AT PUBLIC HEALTH
FUNDING AND KEY HEALTH FACTS



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PREVENTION IN ACTION

De-Normalizing Smoking and Preventing Tobacco Related Illnesses

By Linda Aragon, Program Director, Tobacco Control and Prevention Program at Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Since its inception in 1989, the Los Angeles County Tobacco Control and Prevention Program (TCPP) has gained valuable experience in the field of tobacco control and continues to evolve in order to tackle the complexities and challenges of implementing a successful tobacco control program. Following the lead of the state tobacco control program, TCPP transitioned from a health education approach focusing on individual-level behavior change to a policy-based approach targeting community-level social norms.

As TCPP changed processes, we had to develop different and new capacities. To do so, TCPP collaborated with The Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing (The Center) to develop a step-by-step approach that could be used by community partners to plan and implement their work. The Policy Adoption and Implementation model is separated into five distinct phases that build upon each other:

- 1. Community assessment:** identify the problems and develop an understanding of what is needed to address the issue;
- 2. Policy strategy development:** use information from phase I to build an action plan;
- 3. Coalition building/broadening:** increase public awareness about efforts to address tobacco problem in a community;
- 4. Implementation of policy strategies:** work with communities to educate and inform local officials about the impact of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke; and

5. Policy implementation and enforcement:

work with city officials to ensure adequate resources are created to support the implementation and enforcement of local policies.

In addition to developing this organizing tool, TCPP implemented infrastructural changes that enabled the program to strengthen community partnerships, provide quality technical assistance, and build internal and external capacity to work with community-based organizations to spearhead local tobacco control activities.

Short-term and intermediate outcomes, including the number of tobacco control policies adopted in Los Angeles County cities and the unincorporated areas and the prevalence of cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke exposure have been collected, and long-term outcomes are currently being evaluated.

However, we have found that tobacco control policies, which are part of a comprehensive tobacco control program, change social norms around smoking, reduce smoking prevalence and increase quit attempts.

To date, more than 50 cities and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, which governs the unincorporated areas of the county, have enacted one or more tobacco control policies. The adoption and implementation of these policies create a level playing field for affected businesses and provide increased protection from the harmful effect of secondhand smoke exposure.