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MFH TPCI Evaluation Report Brief 4: School Strategy Evaluation Findings 2005-2008

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MFH Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Initiative

School Strategy Evaluation Findings 2005-2008

Introduction

Due to the significant burden of tobacco use in Missouri and a history of limited tobacco prevention and cessation funding, the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) identified tobacco use as a major health issue in their service area. In 2004, the MFH Board of Directors committed funding to establish the Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Initiative (TPCI). Since its first grant award in late 2004, the Initiative has provided over 50 agencies and organizations with funding to address tobacco use through several strategies including promotion of smoke-free workplaces and prevention of youth smoking.

As the evaluator of the overall Initiative, the Center for Tobacco Policy Research (CTPR) is collecting process and outcome data over the life of the Initiative. Data sources for the evaluation include information collected through the Tobacco Initiative Evaluation System (TIES), interviews with TPCI grantees and MFH staff, and surveillance data (*i.e.,* County Level Study). In 2008, CTPR released a report on evaluation findings for the first three years of the school and workplace-based strategies (*i.e.,* 2005-2007). Highlights from this report for the school strategy are presented on the following pages. Findings from data collected via TIES have been updated through 2008. To access the entire evaluation report, visit http://mec.wustl.edu.

School Strategy Overview

The goal of TPCI's school-based programs is to prevent tobacco use through education and policy change within schools and their surrounding communities. This includes planning and implementing various educational and advocacy activities.

The following programs were implemented as part of the school strategy in 2005-2008:

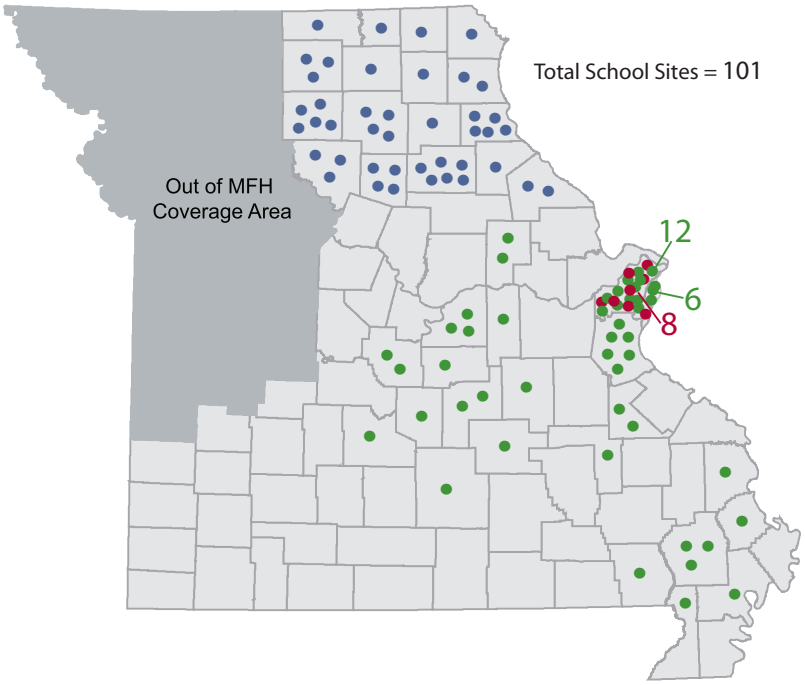
- *Project Smokebusters (Smokebusters)*
  Regional Grantee: Randolph County Health Department
  4 community grantees; 61 program sites
- *Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU)*
  Regional Grantee: American Lung Association of the Central States
  15 community grantees; 159 program sites
- *Youth Empowerment in Action (YEA!)*
  Regional Grantee: University of Missouri-St. Louis
  0 community grantees*; 31 program sites

Between 2005 and 2008, the TPCI school strategy included: 3 regional programs with **19** community grantees working with **251** school sites who were involved in **25** policy changes.

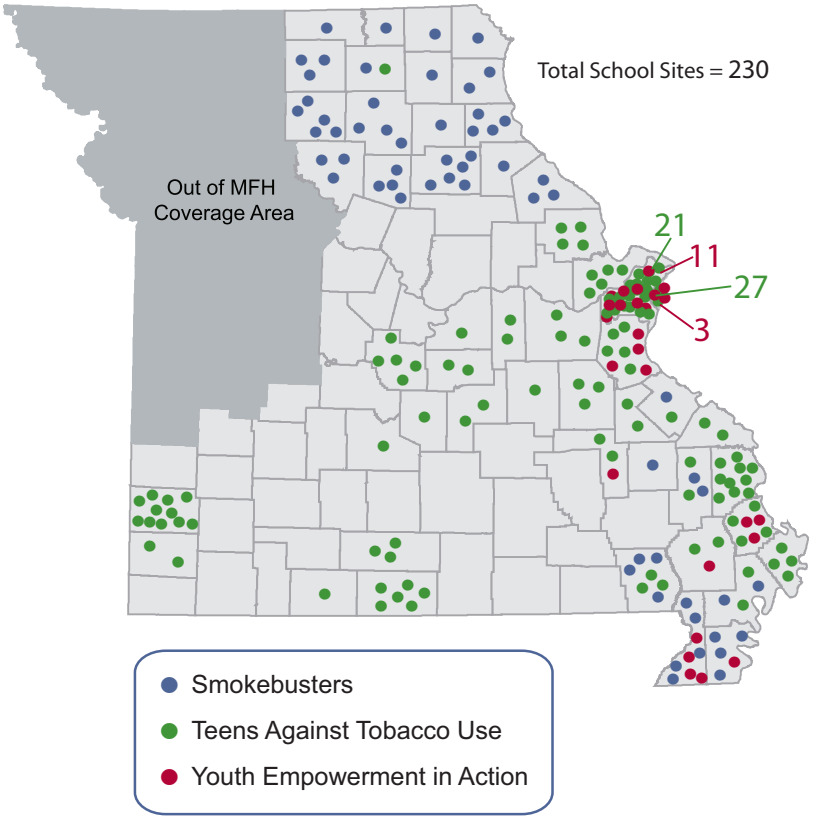
*No community grantee RFPs were released for this program

School Activities/Outputs

TPCI school program sites active in 2005-2006



TPCI school program sites active in 2007-2008



What was the reach of the school programs?

By the end of 2008,the three school programs had been implemented in sites across the state. In the first four years of the school strategy, a total of 251 school sites were involved with TPCI at some point in time.

Between 2005 and 2006, 101 sites were affiliated with TPCI programs. Eighty of these sites continued into 2007, and by the end of 2008 an additional 150 sites came on board. This resulted in 230 active sites at the end of 2008.

Many of the newly recruited school sites in 2007 were part of the TATU program. In 2006 and again in 2007, TATU significantly increased the number of community grantees implementing their program. Several of the new TATU sites were in southern Missouri, an area only covered by a few school sites in 2005-2006. The change in coverage can be seen in the maps to the left showing the location of school sites at two time points, 2005-2006 and 2007-2008.

The maps also show the YEA! program expanding in the St. Louis area and moving into southeastern Missouri. After changes to the grant award were made, Smokebusters was allowed to expand MFH-supported program activities beyond northeastern Missouri. At the end of 2008, the Smokebusters sites in southeastern Missouri became part of TPCI.

The length of time sites were actively involved in TPCI-funded activities depended on the program. The table to the right shows the average number of months sites were involved in at least one programmatic activity in 2007 and 2008. The Smokebusters and YEA! programs involved students in program activities for most of the school year, while TATU students conducted activities for a fewer number of months.

Average number of months TPCI program sites were active in 2007 and 2008

School Program	Months Active in 2007*	Months Active in 2008*
Project Smokebusters	7.9	8.5
Teens Against Tobacco Use	5.0	5.8
Youth Empowerment in Action	8.1	9.5

* average number of months sites were involved in at least one programmatic activity

What strategies were used for recruiting program sites?

Relationships were the main factor behind successful program site recruitment. Personal connections were key to recruitment of new school sites. Grantees often contacted someone they knew in a school first and would branch out from there. It was also helpful to promote sites already participating in their programs; other schools would hear about the program and come to the grantees requesting to be a program site.

> *Knowing one another, that's what did it. We didn't really have any problem at all [recruiting sites]. They came to us.*

Other successful recruitment strategies for program sites included:

- Promoting the program as meeting community service requirements for students;
- Communicating the need for a program (*e.g.,* high smoking rates in a school or region); and
- Promoting the resources and support schools would receive if they became a program site.

Even with several successful strategies to employ, grantees often had difficulty recruiting new school sites. The biggest challenge facing grantees in recruitment was the amount of activities schools are already required to do under state and federal mandates. Schools often do not have the capacity or interest in taking on another program.

> *It's kind of tough to get TATU on the agenda of some schools...they already have so much on their agenda and things that they have to cover that it's sometimes tough for them to get buy-in on another activity.*

What activities were implemented through school programs?

Activities conducted in school settings fell into three categories:

Capacity-Building – Activities conducted by grantees to prepare sites for implementing their program.

Educational – Activities conducted by or with youth to increase knowledge or skills to prevent tobacco use.

Advocacy – Activities that involve youth arguing for, defending, or recommending policy change regarding tobacco issues.

Within the three categories there were a variety of specific activities ranging from training youth under capacity-building to communicating with decision makers under advocacy.

Reach of TPCI school programs in 2005-2008

Capacity-Building	TATU	Smokebusters	YEA!	Total*
Trained Adults	208	195	209	612
Trained Youth	2,293	1,320	2,732	6,345
Provided funding	$ 389	$ 160	$154,017	$ 154,566
Educational	**TATU**	**Smokebusters**	**YEA!**	**Total***
Conducted classroom presentations	32,022	50,702	10,064	92,788
Presented in the community	11,769	48,610	1,555	61,934
Distributed brochures or other materials	9,396	48,598	12,944	70,938
Organized community awareness event	10,786	44,049	8,061	62,896
Published or aired educational media messages	1,000	32,322,010	439,235	32,762,245
Advocacy	**TATU**	**Smokebusters**	**YEA!**	**Total***
Presented in the school or community	3,886	7,945	4,141	15,972
Published or aired media messages encouraging policy change	# not reported	552,458	203,685	756,143
Collected endorsements	# not reported	8,739	51	8,790
Communicated with decision makers	# not reported	10,532	58	10,590

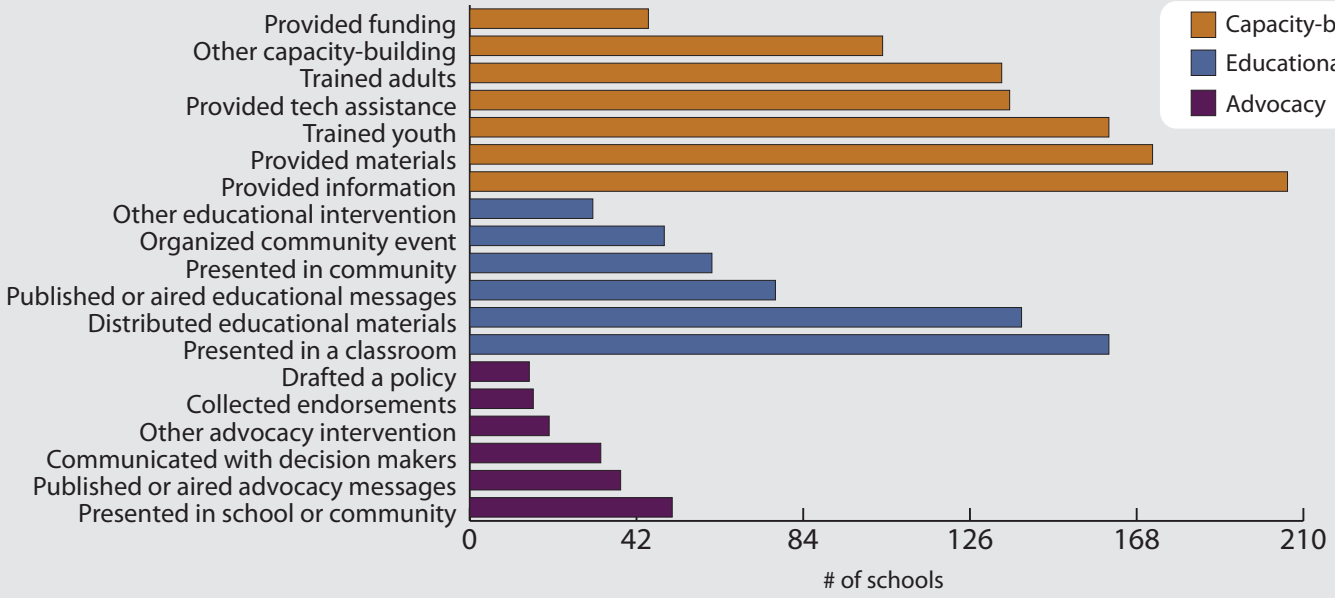
* Unless otherwise specified, totals are an estimate of the number of people reached by or involved in each activity.
Note: For numbers related to media messages it is an estimate of the maximum number of possible exposures a message may have had (*i.e.,* an individual may have heard the message more than once.)

The table to the left shows the number of people reached by some of the activities during 2005 through 2008.

The figure on the adjacent page shows the types of activities each program implemented with sites in 2007 and 2008.

All programs had school sites that were involved in some type of capacity-building and educational activity. There were comparatively fewer schools that had students advocating for policy change.

Types of activities conducted by TPCI school programs in 2007 and 2008



What were the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful sites?

Levels of enthusiasm and commitment from program site administrators, sponsors, and students both facilitated and challenged the implementation of school programs. Sites with enthusiastic students and faculty/sponsors were more successful, while sites with a lack of support were less successful.

Grantees identified the following characteristics of successful school sites:

- High student involvement
- Enthusiastic program site sponsor
- Strong support from administration or other stakeholder
- Enthusiasm to advocate in the community
- Involvement in policy change

> *They [the kids] put together a wonderful powerpoint presentation and wowed the school board. They were just ecstatic. That makes it all worthwhile, just to see how they did it. They did it all. Little things like that are big.*

Several grantees reported having more students participating in their programs than many of them originally anticipated. Due to the structure of the programs, some grantees had more students than they could easily handle at one time. This lead to them becoming more creative with how they structured student groups (*e.g.*, creating committees for specific activities).

> *Several of the programs thought maybe they would have ten or 20 kids participate and they have 70 or more. They're doing far more presentations than they ever anticipated, which is great.*

School Outcomes

What effect did involvement in school programs have on students conducting advocacy efforts?

Due to their involvement in school programs, grantees reported that students became more aware of the impact of tobacco in their communities and had learned the skills to become better teachers, advocates, and leaders.

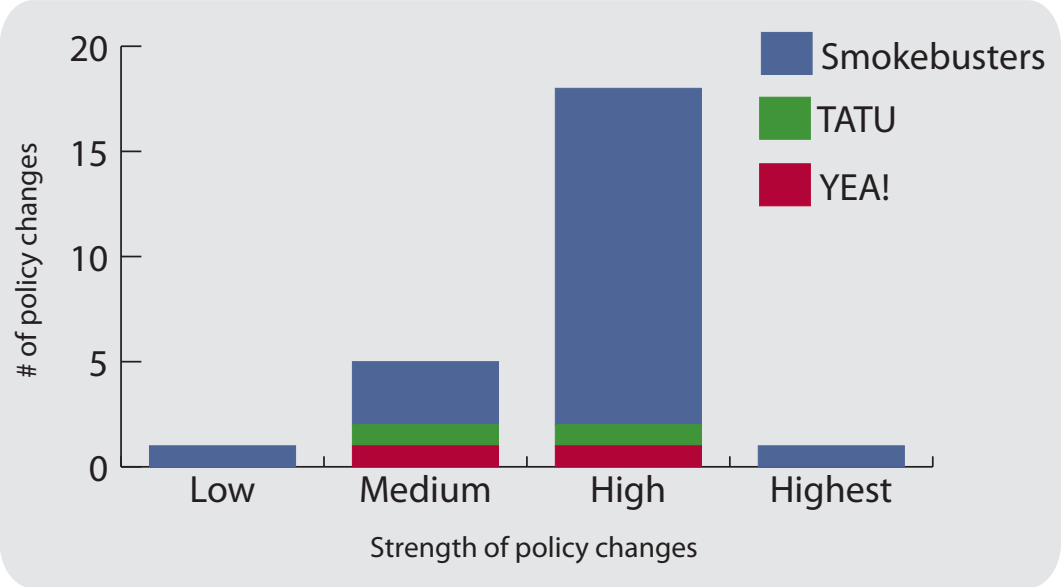
All three programs educated students about the effects of tobacco use, involvement of the tobacco industry, and skills to communicate this information. However, Smokebusters was the only program that actually identified students advocating for policy change as one of their program's primary objectives.

> *They did their homework, took pictures, did a survey, compiled all this data, and each one of them had something to say. They went into the school board meeting the next month and were very well organized and answered all of their questions, and got their policy passed unanimously. And I think that probably stands out as the impact of look, I really made a difference, and did it in the correct way.*

What policy changes occurred?

Since 2006, school program participants were involved in advocating for a total of 25 policies that were changed. Students affiliated with Smokebusters were involved with 76% of the reported policy changes. Based on information provided by grantees, the policies were rated on their strength and reach. The figure below presents the number of policy changes with which each program site was involved categorized by the strength of the policies.

Number of policy changes TPCI school programs were involved with by strength during 2005 through 2008



Levels of Strength for a Policy Change

Low- the policy applies to one area of the facility (*e.g.,* offices, breakroom, a section of a restaurant).

Medium- the policy applies to all indoor areas of a facility with no exemptions; it applies to all employees, patrons, and visitors.

High- the policy applies to the entire campus of the facility (inside and outside of the property) with no exemptions; it applies to all employees, patrons, and visitors.

Highest- the policy is a community-based, 100% indoor smoke-free workplace policy.

Conclusions

Now in the fifth year of implementation, there are many lessons learned that will be helpful for grantees and other stakeholders as TPCI moves forward. The following are highlights from some of the evaluation findings.

Relationships matter

Grantees that paid attention to relationships reaped the benefits. Grantees consistently emphasized the importance of building and maintaining partnerships with other organizations and groups within their communities. Partners are important for contributing resources, providing technical assistance, and connecting programs to participants. *Continuing to maintain established relationships will be important for TPCI grantees moving forward, but strengthening connections within TPCI will also be key.*

> *Knowing one another, that's what did it. We didn't really have a problem at all [recruiting sites]. They came to us.*

Levels of readiness affect implementation

Grantees often reported initially targeting sites that were ready for change. For example, the most successful school sites had strong support from a school administrator, an enthusiastic program site sponsor, and involved students who were excited to advocate at their school and in their community. Targeting the sites that are ready is the best approach for accomplishing change. *However, achieving the same, or an even wider, reach in the future may take more time due to lower levels of readiness within the schools, worksites, and communities that remain.*

Advocating for policy change is key

TPCI school grantees and program participants advocated for 25 policy changes between 2005 and 2008. However, as the example on page five illustrates, TPCI school programs still focus a majority of their activities on education and less on advocacy. This holds true for workplace programs as well. While education is an important piece of a comprehensive effort, policy change either to increase the price of tobacco or reduce exposure to second-hand smoke has some of the clearest and most profound effects on reducing the prevalence of tobacco use. *All grantees involved with TPCI should be responsible for advocating for change, including school and workplace programs.*

> *I just try to keep planting the seeds, get them thinking about it [policy change]. It has been a different journey with all of them.*

Strengthening internal evaluation is needed

At the end of the third year of the Initiative, grantees often reported they were just beginning to collect relevant evaluation data for their programs. Many anecdotal observations had been made about change due to their programs, and when it was clear cut (*e.g.*, policy change), it was recorded. However, data to make the connection between program activities that built awareness (*e.g.*, community events, media) and resulting actions were weak. *For TPCI grantees moving forward a stronger focus on internal data collection and analysis is needed.*

Building capacity and creating change takes time

For the majority of grantees, several months were needed to get their programs up and running. This included administrative tasks, such as hiring staff, as well as developing materials and piloting interventions. For a two- or three-year grant, this delay cut into the time period available for implementation and potentially diminished the level at which programs were able to achieve their objectives. *Achievement of short-term outcomes has begun to occur, however changes in longer-term goals, such as reducing smoking prevalence, still require more time.*

> *An extra year might have been beneficial because it takes six months to get up and running.*

Planning for sustainability is essential

Grantees are at various planning stages for sustainability, with the majority just beginning to address it. Most grantees are focused on finding funding, with many primarily focused on MFH grants. There was little being done to ensure buy-in from program sites. *Moving forward, the sustainability of TPCI programs depends on finding a balance between the resources grantees provide and what sites or participants can contribute.* In addition, grantees need to develop more comprehensive plans for sustainability that look beyond receiving funding.

For more information about this report or other evaluation activities, please contact:

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