

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Tobacco Prevention Information for Parents and Caregivers

Children and adolescents learn about tobacco use through friends and family members who smoke cigarettes/cigars or chew tobacco. Usually sometime in middle or high school, children consider smoking or chewing tobacco as a way to fit in with their friends. The media also plays a large role in influencing a child's decision to use tobacco.

By educating children and adolescents about the negative side effects of tobacco products, parents and caregivers have the opportunity to decrease youth exposure to and use of tobacco.

Why do we care?

In Maryland...

About 50 - 60 youth in Maryland will begin smoking each day, replacing the longtime smokers who either quit or die.

Nearly one out of three Maryland youth are regular smokers by age 17.

12,200 youth (under 18) become new daily smokers each year in Maryland.

270,000 Maryland youth are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

More Maryland children alive today will die from tobacco use than from any other single cause - including AIDS, alcohol, accidents, murders, suicides, illegal drug use and fires combined.

As the number one killer of Marylanders, tobacco use robs us of over 7,700 family members and costs our economy over 1.5 billion dollars each year.

The annual health care cost in Maryland directly caused by smoking is over \$1.5 billion.

When compared to their developmental peers:

- Children who use tobacco products have a shorter life expectancy.
- Children who use tobacco products are more likely to develop lung cancer.
- Children who use tobacco products have a greater risk of obesity.
- Children who use tobacco products are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.
- Children who use tobacco products are more likely to have heart problems as they grow older.

What can we do about it?

- **Educate yourself about tobacco use.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids provide information on how to talk to kids about tobacco use. If you don't have access to these resources through the Internet, contact the Center for School Mental Health Analysis and Action at (410) 706-0980. The Center has a long history of helping children and adolescents avoid and quit using tobacco products.

- **Talk to your children about smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco.** Rather than wait until their friend asks them if they want a light, talk honestly with your child or adolescent about smoking. When were you first offered a cigarette? Do you know anyone who couldn't play sports because of smoking? Do you have any friends or family members who lost their lives due to illnesses caused by tobacco use? Be proactive about talking to your children about tobacco.
- **Learn about the school policy on tobacco use.** Make sure your child knows the consequences of smoking or chewing tobacco on school grounds.
- **Ask your child what they think about tobacco products.** Do they think smoking or chewing is cool? Do they know anyone who smokes? Try to create an environment in which your child can honestly talk to you about their experiences with tobacco products. Threats of punishment will not make your child want to talk to you about smoking or chewing. Let your child know that you're there for them and want what's best for their long-term health.
- **Make the news real.** Cut out newspaper advertisements or print them off the Internet to help your child think about the media's role in promoting tobacco use.

Helpful Forms and Handouts

- AACAP Facts for Families
 - *Tobacco and Kids:* <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/68.htm>
- Center for Disease Control:
 - *Benefits of Quitting:*
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr_2004/consumerpiece/page8.htm.
 - *Fact Sheet:* http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/research_data/youth/Youth_Factsheet.htm
 - *Tobacco Free Sports:*
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/youth/educational_materials/sports/00_pdfs/tobacco-free_sports_playbook.pdf
 - *Youth Tobacco Cessation Guide:*
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/how_to_quit/00_pdfs/IQuit.pdf
- Center for School Mental Health:
 - *Tobacco Prevention Resource Packet:*
http://csmh.umaryland.edu/resources.html/resource_packets/download_files/tobacco_prevention_2002.pdf
- KidsHealth
 - *Kids and Smoking:* <http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/smoking.html>
- University of Wisconsin, Student Health Promotion Office:
 - *Helping a Smoker Kick the Habit:*
<http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/healthwellness/studenthealthpromotion/Docs/Handouts/tobacco/tobacco1.pdf>
 - *Smokeless Tobacco:*
<http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/healthwellness/studenthealthpromotion/Docs/Handouts/tobacco/tobacco2.pdf>
 - *Smoking and Your Reproductive Health:*
<http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/healthwellness/studenthealthpromotion/Docs/Handouts/tobacco/tobacco3.pdf>

- *Stop Before you Start:*
<http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/healthwellness/studenthealthpromotion/Docs/Handouts/tobacco/tobacco4.pdf>
- *Tobacco:*
<http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/healthwellness/studenthealthpromotion/Docs/Handouts/tobacco/tobacco5.pdf>

Additional Resources

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. (2006). <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/>

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. (2006). *Identification and elimination of health disparities among populations.* <http://www.scdhec.net/health/chcdp/tobacco/goal4.htm>.

**Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*