

SHIP Tobacco-free Campuses Initiative

Final evaluation report

Prepared for Brown-Nicollet Community Health Board as part of their SHIP grant evaluation

Brown-Nicollet Community Health Board (CHB) is working on a Tobacco-free Campuses initiative that focuses on implementing policies for tobacco-free postsecondary grounds. The project is part of a larger effort by Brown-Nicollet CHB, which is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

This report provides a snapshot of the overall impact of this initiative, with emphasis on reporting from the most recent evaluation period (January 2011 through June 2011). It was prepared by Wilder Research. Brown-Nicollet SHIP and their technical assistance providers from the American Lung Association (ALAMN) compiled existing data and collected original data as a part of this evaluation, using tools developed by Wilder Research.

Reach

Brown-Nicollet's service area includes a population of approximately 59,559. Brown-Nicollet SHIP is working with the American Lung Association-Minnesota (ALAMN) on tobacco policies at South Central College (Mankato and Faribault campuses), Martin Luther College, and Gustavus Adolphus College.

Overall, 9,000 students and 700 faculty and staff are represented by these colleges. Therefore, this initiative could impact a total of 9,700 people or 16 percent of the total population of Brown and Nicollet counties. This initiative will also affect the larger community due to decreased exposure to secondhand smoke if there are policy changes that include a ban on tobacco at all school-sponsored events.

Activities

From January 2011 through June 2011, SHIP staff, ALAMN, and HONU worked together to complete key informant interviews with representatives of participating campuses.

According to the respondents, campus taskforces at each college are still meeting to discuss implementation of a tobacco-free campus policy. One group is in the process of putting together a proposal to submit to the board of trustees and college president who will then make the final decision. Respondents felt that these discussions have had a neutral or slightly positive impact on campus. There seems to be strong interest among students and some faculty in implementing a tobacco-free policy, though smoking groups on campus are generally opposed to it.

Respondents note that the biggest successes of this initiative thus far are student involvement, employee support, and proposals produced by the wellness committee. Current challenges to this initiative are student pushback (idea that tobacco-free policies infringe upon rights), perception that enforcement is not possible, and lack of communication about policy approval process (i.e., groups not knowing appropriate steps to take).

ALAMN and HONU have also completed a number of action steps related to this intervention. Some of these activities include:

- Conducting campus-wide surveys about tobacco use.
- Forming tobacco-free campus committees.
- Organizing alumni to send messages to school paper in support of a tobacco-free policy.
- Holding meetings with campus businesses.
- Reviewing various tobacco policies up for adoption.
- Holding tobacco-free kick-off events.

Policy, systems, and environments

One of the goals of SHIP is to change policies, systems, and environments to make the healthy choice the easy choice. In the case of the Tobacco-free Campuses initiative, it means specifically changing policies, systems, and environments to create tobacco-free campuses, dormitories, and school-sponsored events, which will result in less exposure to tobacco and reduced chronic disease associated with tobacco exposure.

This initiative has been successful in putting together proposals for a tobacco-free campus policy at Martin Luther College and Gustavus Adolphus College. Once adopted and implemented, the work of this initiative will be somewhat sustainable. However, additional efforts, such as education about the policy, and enforcement will be needed to ensure implementation.

Longer-term impact

The 2010 Southwest/South Central Adult Health Survey found that 25 percent of 18-34 year olds in Brown and Nicollet counties smoke every day, which is significantly higher than the proportion in the overall adult population (14%). Thirty-six percent of Brown and Nicollet county residents said they had been exposed to secondhand smoke in a public place during the past week. These findings indicate that the college-age population

should be a key focus for tobacco reduction efforts, and that public places (including college campuses and public events on campus) are a critical source of secondhand smoke exposure.

Brown-Nicollet SHIP is on its way to achieving the short-term outcome of increasing the number of postsecondary schools in both counties that adopt tobacco-free policies. If tobacco-free policies are passed and/or other steps are taken to limit tobacco use and exposure on campuses, tobacco exposure will decrease among school staff and students, which will ultimately decrease the proportion of Brown and Nicollet county residents with chronic diseases associated with tobacco use.



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