

SHIP Tobacco-free Worksites 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 the SHIP Tobacco-free Worksites initiative that focuses on implementing policies for tobacco-free workplaces. 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 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 46,618 working-age (16-64) adults. Brown-Nicollet SHIP is working with the Heart of New Ulm (HONU) to further tobacco-free grounds policies at three worksites: J&R Schugel Trucking, Shelter Products, and Oak Hills Living Center.

This table shows the number of employees that have been or will be impacted by tobacco-free policies.

	Total # of employees	# of employees who quit who using tobacco	% of employees who quit using tobacco
J&R Schugel Trucking	80	3	4%
Shelter Products	30	1	3%
Oak Hills Living Center	210	0	0%

This initiative impacted a total of four employees who quit using tobacco when their worksite implemented a tobacco-free policy, and reduced secondhand smoke exposure for another 320 employees and countless visitors to these worksites.

Activities

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

According to the respondents, the Tobacco-free Worksites initiative has had a positive impact on their workplaces. Respondents mentioned increased employee productivity due to fewer smoking breaks. They also mentioned general improvements to the environment since implementing their tobacco-free grounds policy as well as an enhanced reputation in the community. Two respondents specifically mentioned reduced employee exposure to secondhand smoke and reduced litter on the grounds as a positive impact of the initiative:

Visitors had made comments to the receptionist before the policy was in place that they had to walk through a cloud of blue smoke to get in the building. We make a better impression to the community now that we are tobacco-free on our grounds.

Respondents also discussed challenges to implementing the tobacco-free policy. The main issues mentioned were difficulties enforcing the new policy among employees and effectively communicating it to visitors and traveling workers. One respondent also brought up the challenge of keeping employees, especially current smokers, positive about the changes. These worksites will need to address these issues in order to see continued change.

HONU has also completed a number of action steps related to this intervention, including distributing signs about going tobacco-free and conducting tobacco cessation classes at each worksite.

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 Worksite initiative, it means specifically changing policies, systems, and environments at workplaces to create tobacco-free grounds, which will result in less exposure to tobacco and reduced chronic disease associated with tobacco exposure.

This initiative has been successful in implementing tobacco-free policies at three Brown and Nicollet county businesses: Oak Hills Living Center, Shelter Products, and J&R Schugel Trucking. In addition to implementing a formal policy, each worksite has taken other steps to promote a healthy work environment:

- Oak Hills Living Center offered a smoking cessation class for all employees.

- J&R Schugel currently distributes a monthly newsletter, offers cessation products through employee health benefits, and works with HONU on a worksite wellness initiative.
- Shelter Products is also working with HONU on worksite wellness, and communicates pro-health, tobacco-free messages with paycheck stuffers and posters in break areas.

The progress made at these three sites is somewhat sustainable. Now that policies are in place, these workplaces are likely to remain tobacco-free, but additional efforts, such as additional signage to inform visitors and continuing support of employees who are ready to quit tobacco use, are needed to ensure the success of this initiative.

Longer-term impact

The 2010 Southwest/South Central Adult Health Survey found that 14 percent of adults in Brown and Nicollet counties are current smokers. In addition, 36 percent of residents said they had been exposed to secondhand smoke in a public place during the past week. This indicates a need to continue efforts to reduce tobacco use and exposure in the community.

Brown-Nicollet SHIP is on its way to achieving the short-term outcome of eliminating tobacco use at worksites. If more workplaces adopt tobacco-free policies and/or take additional steps to limit tobacco use on their grounds, tobacco use and exposure will decrease among employees, which will ultimately decrease the proportion of Brown and Nicollet county residents with chronic diseases associated with tobacco use.



**Wilder
Research**

Information. Insight. Impact.

451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700
www.wilderresearch.org



For more information

For more information, contact Nicole MartinRogers at Wilder Research, 651-280-2682
or
Becky Weber at Brown-Nicollet Community Health, 507-934-4140

Authors: Brittney Wagner and Lida Gilbertson
July 2011