

SHIP Tobacco-free Parks Intervention

Final evaluation report

Prepared for Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health as part of their SHIP grant evaluation

Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health is working with communities in their service area on the Tobacco-free Parks Initiative that focuses on implementing tobacco-free policies for parks, playgrounds, beaches, zoos, fairs, and other recreational settings. The Association of Nonsmokers-Minnesota (ANSR) has been engaged through this initiative. The project is part of a larger effort by Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health, which is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

This report provides a snapshot of progress from June 2010 through June 2011. It was prepared by Wilder Research. Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health and ANSR compiled existing data and collected original data as a part of this evaluation, using tools developed by Wilder Research.

Reach

Le Sueur and Waseca counties have a population of approximately 46,830 combined. Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health is working on tobacco-free policies in the City of Waseca parks, as well as the Le Sueur County Fairgrounds and the Waseca County Fairgrounds.

Recreational setting	Number of community residents potentially affected by the initiative (reach)
Waseca County Fairgrounds	41,100
Le Sueur County Fairgrounds	11,000-12,000
City of Waseca Parks	9,410

According to the Minnesota Federation of County Fairs website, 11,000-12,000 people attend the Le Sueur County Fair annually and 41,100 people attend the Waseca County Fair annually. The population of the City of Waseca is shown in the table above, as residents who use the park system will be affected by the initiative. In total, these sites have an annual attendance of at least 62,510 people per year (assuming complete duplication at the fairs and park). People from outside these two counties will also be impacted, as non-residents may attend these counties' fairs or parks.

Activities

From January through June 2011, SHIP staff worked to complete a comprehensive assessment of current support for the implementation of tobacco-free policies for parks, fairs, and other recreational settings in each county.

Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with 16 representatives of Le Sueur and Waseca counties, including elected officials, park staff, fair board members, and other community leaders. These interviews provided guidance on areas of opportunity and potential barriers as SHIP staff moved forward in the implementation process. Overall, respondents were much more likely to say tobacco use should be restricted while youth are present. The most common benefit listed by respondents to having a tobacco-free policy in all park and recreational areas was avoiding secondhand smoke while in those areas. Barriers that respondents mentioned regarding tobacco-free policy implementation included the difficulty of enforcement and infringement on personal freedom.

Surveys

Surveys were also conducted with attendees at the City of Waseca Clear Lake Park, the Waseca County Fair, Giant Days in Le Sueur, and the Le Sueur County Fair. These surveys sought to gather information about the level of community support for tobacco-free policies at these locations. A total of 350 individuals completed the survey. Results indicate that the majority of respondents are in favor of the development of tobacco-free policies within the locations surveyed. These survey results were presented by SHIP and ANSR staff to both the Waseca County Fair Board and Le Sueur County Fair Board in January 2011.

Youth involvement

Eleven youth from Waseca County were directly involved with this intervention. From September 2010 through May 2011, these youth participated in seven Waseca Community Education Advisory Council tobacco-free parks trainings. At the trainings they learned about tobacco-free policies, secondhand smoke, and how to advocate for tobacco-free parks to their local governmental entities. To garner support for their efforts, the youth collected three letters of support and about 100 petition signatures from community members. Several youth also participated in a cigarette litter clean-up in the City of Waseca parks in Fall 2010, which provided media exposure.

The youth also presented information and tobacco-free policy requests to the Waseca School Board, Park Board, and City Council, and were successful in advocating for policies in several Waseca parks. The following is a list of the presentations offered to community stakeholders from January 2011 through June 2011.

Presentation	Date of presentation	Number of attendees
Implementation meeting with Waseca Park Director	6/6/2011	4
Waseca City Council	5/3/2011	50+
Waseca Park Board	4/19/2011	11
Waseca Community Education Advisory Board	3/21/2011	15
Waseca Park Board	3/1/2011	19
Waseca School Board	2/17/2011	15
Le Sueur County Fair Board	1/19/2011	15
Waseca County Fair Board	1/10/2011	12

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 Parks Initiative, it means specifically changing policies, systems, and environments to create tobacco-free parks and other recreational areas.

The initiative has been successful in the creation of several tobacco-free park policies in Waseca County. Achievements include:

- The City of Waseca adopted a policy on May 3rd, 2011, to prohibit tobacco use in Waseca parks where youth activities occur. Tobacco-free signs will be posted in order to enforce the policy, and ANSR staff met with the Waseca Park Director to discuss opportunities for publicizing the changes.
- The City of New Richland adopted a policy on April 11th, 2011, stating that tobacco use is prohibited on the beach of St. Olaf Lake Park and in or within 25 feet of the serving windows of the concession stand at the park, including restrooms. SHIP will be providing signage to inform visitors of the policy.
- To better enforce the Waseca School District’s tobacco-free grounds policy, additional signs were posted on school grounds that declare they are a tobacco-free school property.

The work of each of the sites that have adopted or enforced a tobacco-free policy is somewhat sustainable – some work may be sustained, but additional efforts, such as signs or other forms of enforcement, are needed to ensure implementation.

The Waseca Community Education Board and the Waseca School Board appreciated hearing about the work of the youth involved with the initiative and offered support for tobacco-free parks in Waseca. Although the Le Sueur and Waseca County Fair Boards found the information they received interesting, they have not chosen to act on the creation of a tobacco-free policy to date. ANSR and SHIP staff also sent tobacco-free park policy information to the Park Director in Le Sueur, but follow-up conversations have yielded no action. The survey conducted at Giant Days in Le Sueur also indicated strong support for a tobacco-free policy, but follow-up contacts did not produce any further interest toward advancing policy development.

Impact

According to the 2010 Southwest/South Central Adult Health Survey, 14 percent of Le Sueur and Waseca county residents currently smoke. Forty-five percent of residents indicate they have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime. Additionally, 12 percent of Le Sueur and Waseca County residents have used other tobacco products such as snuff, chewing tobacco, cigars, or pipes in the past 12 months. Nearly 4 out of 10 respondents had been exposed to secondhand smoke in the past seven days. This data shows a need to continue the work that was started with this initiative.

The impact of the Tobacco-free Parks Initiative is already apparent, as two cities have adopted tobacco-free parks policies, and the Waseca School District has taken measures to enforce their tobacco-free grounds policy. SHIP staff and ANSR increased support for tobacco-free parks among community stakeholders through various presentations. Ultimately, these efforts are intended to reduce tobacco use and exposure in community recreational settings, and will hopefully contribute to a decreased incidence of tobacco use by adults and youth. Decreased exposure to secondhand smoke and decreased tobacco use will result in improved overall health and reduction of chronic disease associated with tobacco use among the residents of Le Sueur and Waseca counties.



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JUNE 2011