

CDC/OSH and TTAC Tobacco-Related Disparities Call

May 6, 2010

Objectives

- Engage coalitions in U.S. territories in tobacco prevention and control work.
- Discuss the coalition's role in tobacco-related disparities work.
- Recognize the unique needs of populations experiencing tobacco-related disparities.

Welcome & Introduction of Speakers- Debra Morris, TTAC

Overview of the US Territories- Michelle Williams, MPH, Program Consultant, Office on Smoking and Health, CDC

The U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico should be commended on their efforts towards tobacco control and prevention in populations with disparities. The disadvantages associated with operating in these territories are not addressed in the best practices created by the CDC, they are not a part of the tobacco control state highlights, nor do they appear on maps of tobacco control at OSH. Despite these challenges, both the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico continue to be very productive, and successful, in tobacco control. Puerto Rico has the strongest clean indoor-air law of all the U.S. territories, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are close to getting their bill signed into policy this year. Their success stories can be used as examples to be shared and replicated in other states and territories.

Working Collaboratively in the U.S. Virgin Islands –Dynel Lang, MPA, Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Manager, U.S. Virgin Islands

The U.S. Virgin Islands are located eighty miles east of Puerto Rico and are made up of four major islands: St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, and Water Island. The prevalence of tobacco use in the USVI has dropped from a little under 10% in 2001 to slightly above 6% in 2008. The highest prevalence rates are seen in individuals between the ages of thirty-five and sixty-four, with those between forty-five and fifty-four years of age reaching a prevalence rate of 8.7%. Of current adult smokers, 51% are non-Hispanic white, 28.1% are non-Hispanic black, and 15.7% are Hispanic.

The U.S.V.I. tobacco control and prevention coalition has been in existence for five years and is composed of stakeholders from St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. The coalition boasts representation from public and private sectors, faith-based communities, and community organizations. Coalition members have been active in educating the community on the health hazards of tobacco use through a number of outlets. These include writing letters to the editors of newspapers and making appearances on popular radio shows.

Overall, the coalition provides recommendations for community interventions, activities and physical support. Their recent focus has been on educating the public about the ills of secondhand smoke, and lobbying toward a comprehensive smoke free air law for the U.S.V.I.

The Coalition's Role in Advocacy - Juan Carlos Vega, MLS, Librarian Consultant & National Latino Tobacco Control Network (NLTCN) Advisory Committee Member

In Puerto Rico, smoking is responsible for 11.5% of all deaths and 10% of all health care costs. They have the highest incidence of oral and pharyngeal cancer among the United States and territories. Puerto Rico has seen great improvements in tobacco use prevalence rates in the past decade. They are the third jurisdiction with the lowest prevalence rates. The current smoking prevalence rate among adults is 11.6%, a significant drop from the recorded 20.3% in 1996. Through the implementation of two strategies, the tobacco control and prevention efforts in Puerto Rico have resulted in lower prevalence rates and a change in the social norm of smoking habits.

In order to determine their level of readiness, the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Puerto Rico developed a table to map their priority areas, including allocation of settlement funds, industry sponsorship of community groups, and the clean indoor act. By assessing their level of readiness the coalition was able to determine what was needed and what the next steps were. The coalition has been working with a budget that was far below the CDC recommended amount; however, despite their minimal budget, the coalition has been extremely successful in their efforts.

Community Outreach

The coalition membership is made up of numerous community organizations and private and public companies in Puerto Rico. One of the most important components of the coalition is their community outreach. They provide trainings and workshops to help health care providers incorporate evidence-based tobacco control practices into their clinical settings. They have conducted trainings for the Puerto Rico Department of Health in order to create tobacco cessation services in each of the 8 health regions around the island. Other efforts include training and quality control to Quitline counselors, creation of culturally appropriate educational materials, and hosting tobacco summits in Puerto Rico since 2002.

Tobacco Control Policies

The Coalition for a Tobacco Free Puerto Rico has been very successful in advocating for tobacco control policies:

- 2000 Act No. 6: Puerto Rico passed a law that prohibits the sale of tobacco shaped candies near or in schools.
- 2006 Act No. 66: Puerto Rico passed a comprehensive smoke free law that prohibits smoking in workplaces, restaurants, and casinos.
- 2009 Act No. 7: The cigarette excise tax was increased from \$6.15 to \$11.15 on each hundred or fraction of one hundred cigarettes.

These are just a few of the policies that have been enacted in the past decade in Puerto Rico. The success of their efforts can be attributed to the strength of the coalition and the relationships built with

the community and the Department of Health. A complete list and explanation of the strategies used in Puerto Rico can be found in the PDF document “Success Story Tobacco Control Puerto Rico” which was distributed to the Tobacco-Disparities list-serve prior to the call.

Value Added – The National Latino Tobacco Control Network (NLTCN) –Jeannette Noltenius PhD, National Director, NLTCN

The National Latino Tobacco Control Network has been very active in tobacco control and prevention efforts in Puerto Rico. Last year, NLTCN provided technical assistance to Puerto Rico to help stop the distribution of R.J. Reynolds’ curriculum “Right Decisions Right Now” in the country. In tandem with the LGBT network, the NLTCN helped to incorporate LGBT questions in the Department of Health tobacco use surveys, created a working group on Latino LGBT issues, and encouraged participation of the LGBT community in tobacco summits. Overall, the NLTCN has brought resources into Puerto Rico to help them put together and disseminate their success stories.

The NLTCN has a long history of support in Puerto Rico. The network hired Puerto Rican staff, sent representatives to the Summer Institute, created a fellows program for Puerto Rico, supported several LCAT trainings, and even hosted an LCAT national conference in Puerto Rico. They supported participation in the National Menthol Conference and assigned two consultants to Puerto Rico to provide technical assistance and support.

Key Accomplishments of the NLTCN

- Prevented R.J. Reynolds’ curriculum from entering schools in Puerto Rico: The network provided technical assistance and worked with the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, and the CDC, wrote press releases and letters to the Department of Education, and met with public appointed and elected officials to stop the release of the curriculum in Puerto Rico.
- Supported LGBT issues in Puerto Rico: With help from the Rainbow Health Initiative in Minnesota, the network developed a survey targeted towards addressing LGBT issues in Puerto Rico and translated the survey to Spanish. The results were presented at the tobacco summit.

Benefits of the National Networks

- The National Networks can provide beneficial technical assistance, training, resources, contacts, and case studies to the United States and territories.
- The networks have the ability to bring national experts to a state or territory to provide personalized training and technical assistance.
- The networks can support efforts to reach specific populations, assist in planning, and target specific groups.
- The National Networks are able to support policy goals by providing letters of support, media initiatives, engage national partners, and provide specific examples from other states and territories to move policy forward.

The NLTCN website hosts a national directory and a list of consultants that can help your state reach specific populations. In addition, there are 1,400 network members who receive newsletters and alerts on what states are doing around the country to address disparate populations. All of this information can be found online at www.latinotobaccocontrol.org.

OSH Update- Brenda Richards

The CDC's Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) in collaboration with the Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium has been hosting the tobacco-related disparities conference call series for almost three years. The original goal of the calls was to provide an open forum and discussion about tobacco-related health disparities, and to provide a linkage between states and other organizations addressing these disparities. OSH feels that these goals have been met and hopes you have benefited from participating in the calls. The office has made a strategic decision to integrate the disparities call with the current monthly calls that occur within the office.

Please know that this strategic adjustment does not indicate a diminished priority in addressing tobacco-related disparities by the Office on Smoking and Health (OSH). In fact, we think that we will achieve a broader impact on addressing the issues and determining potential solutions through these integrative discussions.

Integration over regular calls is a logical next step that will allow us to consistently include Disparities topics and issues into the current monthly OSH calls (National Tobacco Control Program, Media, and Epidemiology). All participants on the disparities calls should be a part of these monthly calls as well.

The Office on Smoking and Health Tobacco-Related Disparities Toolkit will be going through final clearance and should be available later this year. This toolkit, in conjunction with the conference calls, should serve as a valuable resource for states and territories. In addition, the National Networks are vital sources of information and should be engaged as much as possible.

The next Disparities Call will be our last. It will occur on Thursday, July 1st, 2010 from 3:00-4:15 (EST).

Closing

- Please email ttac@sph.emory.edu with any additional questions
- A Call Evaluation survey will be sent out by email after this call
- The presentations from the call will be sent to participants after the call is complete. If you do not receive the PowerPoints, please email Laura Kolkin at lkolkin@emory.edu.