

Towards No Tobacco

<http://fcs.tamu.edu/health/swat/index.php>

The goal of this project is to reduce youth tobacco use in rural communities by using the comprehensive community approach recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The project is funded by the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas. Only agents in selected counties are currently participating: Armstrong, Swisher, Deaf Smith, Oldham, Motley, Parmer, Randall, and Castro.

Relevance

- Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Texas and the United States.
- Helping children develop healthy habits and avoid destructive habits, such as using tobacco, is an important part of the battle to conquer cancer.
- Including the cost of health care and lost productivity, the cost *per pack* of cigarettes over a lifetime of smoking is estimated to be almost \$40.
- Up to two-thirds of cancer cases can be prevented if behavioral changes are made and destructive habits, such as using tobacco, are avoided.
- Almost everyone who regularly uses tobacco as an adult began before age 19.
- Avoiding tobacco use is one of the most important things people can do to reduce premature deaths, improve health, and reduce health care costs.

- Youth in rural Texas continue to have high smoking rates (24 percent).
- 37,000 Texans die from cancer each year.
- 10,500 Texans die each year due to tobacco use or exposure to tobacco smoke.

Response

Reducing youth tobacco use requires a multi-faceted, comprehensive community approach. Funding from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas supports the project with a 50 percent time project manager and many educational resources.

The project includes these steps:

- Form a task force of adult community leaders who are interested in making public areas in their community tobacco-free. This task force will complete the community assessment and support state tobacco laws and/or support the passage of local ordinances as needed.
- Form and train a task force of youth leaders to provide awareness activities to their community such as County Commissioners Court briefings, news articles, radio and television interviews, motivational/educational skits, and other activities to peers using the project's leadership manual. This team is called Students Winning Against Tobacco (S.W.A.T.). A day-long training is offered annually during summers.
- Provide the 10-session, best-practice program, *Towards No Tobacco*, in schools. At the conclusion of the program, request that students sign a contract not to use tobacco in the future. Students signing the contract are provided a luggage tag for their book bags that allows their signed contracts to be inserted.



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- Provide *Put It Outside for Healthier Kids*, to parents of young children to help them understand the importance of not exposing young children to tobacco smoke.
- Offer cessation programs to those wanting to quit.
- For parents at participating schools, send parent newsletters that focus on preventing tobacco use and exposure of young children to tobacco smoke.
- Provide support for special events such as *Through with Chew* and the *Great American Smoke-Out*.
- Use the tobacco prevention activities developed for the *4-H Health & Safety Officers' Guide*.
- Use the three science fair projects that have been developed to focus on tobacco prevention.

Results

- During FY 08, 13,229 were made by this project.
- 52 youth were members of a Students Winning Against Tobacco (SWAT) team.
- A total of 610 students completed the *Towards No Tobacco* 10-class series, and 422 (70 percent) of these students signed a contract not to ever use tobacco in the future.

Other results included:

- 427 (70 percent) of the students reported learning techniques to say “no” and said they won’t give in to peer pressure.
- 406 (67 percent) of the students said they will consider the physical consequences of using tobacco whenever the topic of tobacco is discussed.
- 422 (70 percent) of the students said they will plan to avoid people who are smoking and will try to meet non-smoking friends.

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