

Helping Young Smokers Quit

Identifying Best Practices for Tobacco Cessation

Youth Smoking Prevention Programs Common, Yet Few Youth Seek Help

A survey conducted by Helping Young Smokers Quit (HYSQ) found that programs to help teens stop smoking are common, yet few youths seek treatment. The study also found fewer programs in geographic areas with higher rates of youth smoking.

The research is posted online and will appear in the January print issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* at <http://www.ajph.org/>.

HYSQ researchers surveyed 591 youth tobacco cessation programs across the country and found that a typical program was school-based, conducted in multiple sessions and served fewer than 50 adolescents a year.

The survey included questions related to program history, setting, method of delivery, staffing, funding, evaluation, enrollment criteria and client characteristics.

"The good news is that state-of-the-art cessation programs are available with highly skilled staff providing treatment," said Susan Curry, HYSQ director and lead author of the study.

The survey found that the majority (88 percent) of individuals who provided treatment were specifically trained in smoking cessation counseling.

"The bad news is that we found fewer of these programs in low-income and rural communities where there are higher rates of youth smoking," said Curry.

In the survey, only 2 percent of programs reported being started because of youth demand for cessation programs and less than 1 percent reported parent demand.

National survey data suggest that kids want to quit using tobacco, according to Curry; however, they may not be aware that their chances of quitting are much better if they receive treatment.

"Research has shown that cognitive behavioral strategies provide the best success to help smokers quit," said Curry, "and the programs we surveyed used these strategies."

Such strategies include training youth to understand and cope with nicotine withdrawal and building social support for quitting.

Although very similar to adult cessation programs, the study found the content of most youth smoking cessation programs was consistent with best practices and included special components for youth.

The study was funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, National Cancer Institute, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Helping Young Smokers Quit is a national research initiative to identify, describe, and evaluate smoking cessation programs available to youth in the United States to help understand what works. This research is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Cancer Institute. Under the direction of Drs. Robin Mermelstein and Susan Curry, the program resides at the [Institute for Health Research and Policy](#) at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

For more information about Helping Young Smokers Quit, visit www.hysq.org.