

NCCDPHP Success Story

Cherokee Nation Capital Makes City Parks Tobacco Free

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Public Health Challenge

Cherokee Nation is a nonreservation Tribal Jurisdictional Service Area (TJSA) covering 14 low income and relatively rural counties in northeastern Oklahoma. More than 100,000 Cherokee tribal citizens reside in the Cherokee Nation TJSA. According to local data, young adults in the Cherokee Nation were significantly more likely to smoke than older adults. To reduce the number of adult smokers, an action plan was adopted that included implementing a smoking ban. By expanding community partnership, the Cherokee Nation SAH was able to develop a community consortium to lead systemswide efforts that address tobacco use and exposure throughout the Cherokee Nation, beginning with Tahlequah, the Cherokee Nation's capital.

Approach

The Cherokee Nation SAH and the Communities of Excellence Coalition teamed with Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) groups from two local high schools and a local gardening club to play a key role in educating the city of Tahlequah about the benefits of a tobacco-free parks ordinance. In a dramatic presentation to the city council, SWAT displayed a plastic box containing nearly 5,000 cigarette butts collected at one park during an 1-hour period. This illustrated the amount of smoking in the park, the negative effect on park aesthetics, and the potential influence on local youth. The campaign used educational packets and face-to-face meetings to convince city leaders about the public health effect of this ordinance.

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At A Glance

In 2009, more than one-third of Cherokee Nation residents used some form of commercial tobacco. The Cherokee Nation Strategic Alliance for Health (SAH) program worked towards reducing tobacco use and exposure in their community and creating sustainable change in the environment. In collaboration with the Cherokee County Communities of Excellence and Tobacco Control Coalitions, the Cherokee Nation SAH launched a tobacco-free parks campaign. In 2010, the city of Tahlequah became the fourth city in Oklahoma to pass a tobacco-free park ordinance.

It is partnership opportunities, among tribal and local decision makers within Cherokee Nation and other agencies that are helping our community make the healthy choice the easy choice.

- Chad Smith, Cherokee Nation Principal Chief

Results

The ordinance was passed and went into effect in June 2010. The ordinance includes all city parks and city recreational facilities in Tahlequah, potentially affecting the city's more than 16,000 residents. To support enforcement and compliance, the ordinance language includes a fine of not less than \$10.00 and not more than \$100.00. In addition, a person could be convicted of a misdemeanor for violation and penalty of the ordinance. Additionally, the campaign has resulted in significant progress being made towards its objectives and associated activities including the following:

- Providing technical assistance workshops to staff and consortium members, including a community training on creating healthy communities, which was well-received.
- Establishing a systemswide community consortium that brings partners together on a quarterly basis to—
 - o Communicate information.
 - o Provide networking opportunities.
 - o Provide technical assistance.
 - o Share tools and resources.
 - o Promote assistance with community assessments and program planning.

What's Next

The policy's short-term, intermediate, and long-term measures include the following:

- Developing tobacco-free signage for parks and recreational facilities.
- Raising awareness among local law enforcement agencies and gaining their support and assistance with monitoring the number of citations issued by local officers.
- Educating the public through the use of radio, print, and social media.

Find Out More

The overall policy goal is to reduce tobacco use through a ban on using tobacco products in Tahlequah city parks and city recreational facilities. Your support to enforce and monitor this policy will prove effective in reducing the consumption and initiation of tobacco as well as exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. Together we can maximize opportunities to make the Cherokee Nation the healthiest place for its residents.

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Web site

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