

Examples of Best Practices in Rhode Island

» The American Legacy Foundation funds a Rhode Island Department of Health youth-led movement (WORD) against tobacco. A youth governing board plans and carries out extensive activities in a state-level Activity Center and in local projects.

The WORD movement focuses on implementing an artistic approach to exposing tobacco industry practices. It uses cultural, community-based arts to build self-esteem and to empower youth and community members across Rhode Island. The WORD movement addresses social and cultural roots that lead to addiction and self-defeating behaviors.

» An effort is under way to develop and implement a statewide tobacco prevention curriculum in middle schools.

» The Department of Health has funded the Rhode Island Student Assistance Services (RISAS) to work with schools to implement an evidence-based curriculum tailored to meet the needs of individual schools.



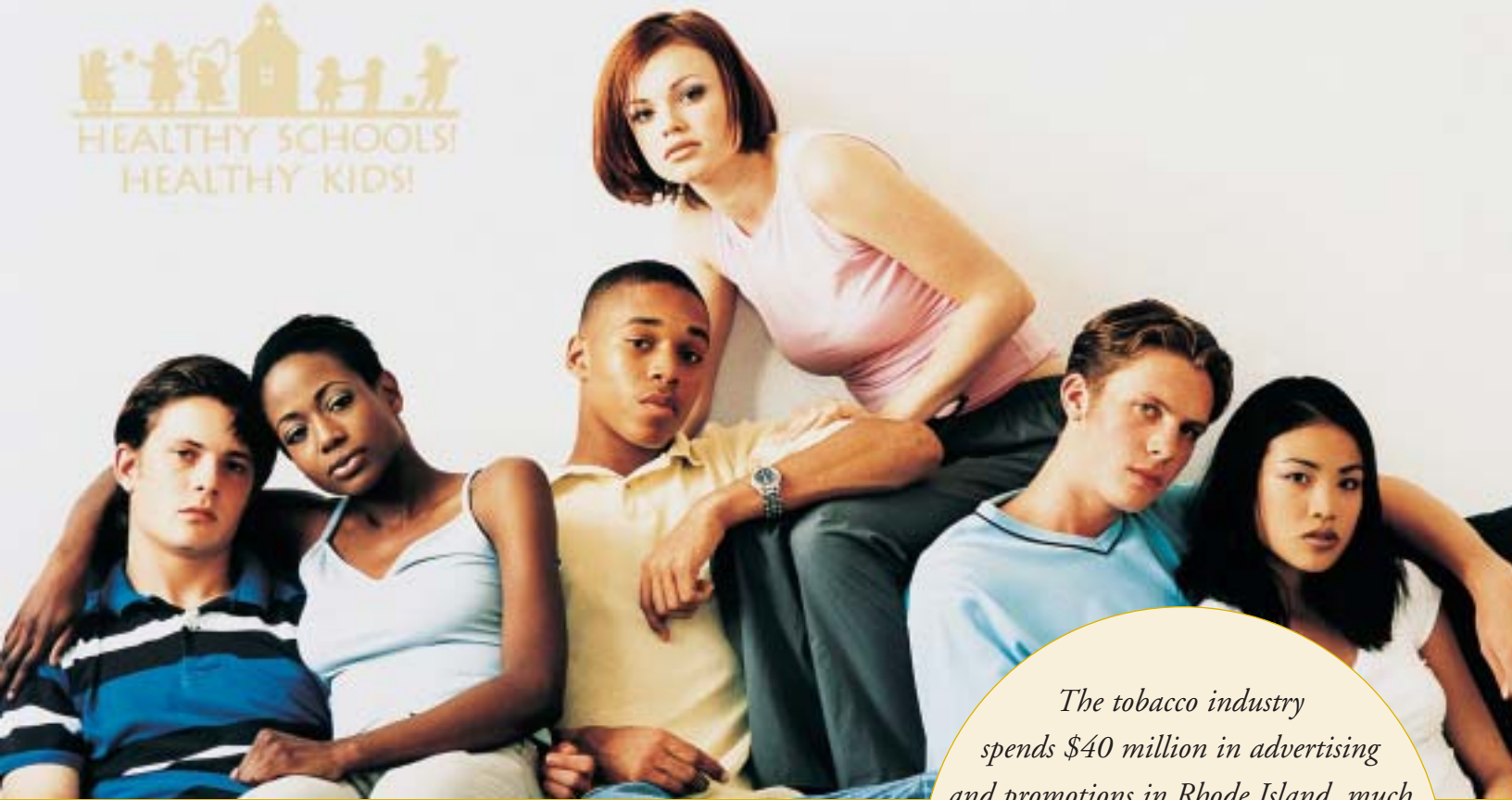
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¹U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Morbidity, and Economic Costs (SAMMEC): Adult SAMMEC and Maternal and Child Health SAMMEC software*, www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sammec.

²U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "State-Specific Prevalence of Cigarette Smoking Among Adults, and Children's and Adolescents' Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke – United States, 1996," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* 46 (44):1038-1043, November 7, 1997.

³Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), "Summary Findings from the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse," 2002, www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda.htm.

⁴Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2003, Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health.



TOBACCO USE

The tobacco industry spends \$40 million in advertising and promotions in Rhode Island, much of it targeting the young people needed to replace quitting and dying smokers. This relentless marketing counters the work of convincing young people not to start using tobacco.

Defining the Challenge

Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death in the United States and is responsible for one out of every five deaths each year in Rhode Island.¹

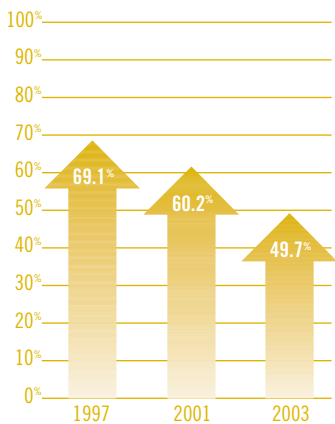
Active smoking kills 1,800 Rhode Islanders per year, with 200 more killed by secondhand smoke.² At current national smoking rates, well over 6 million children under 18 who are alive today will die from smoking-related diseases.³

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and chronic lung diseases.

Tobacco use can cause and exacerbate asthma, a major health issue facing Rhode Island's youth, and also a major cause of absenteeism. Rhode Island has a disproportionately high rate of asthma, and asthma rates are rising. Smoking has also been linked to experimentation with illegal drugs and alcohol. Tobacco use in school bathrooms, although prohibited, is a common occurrence, causing smoke damage, burns, secondhand smoke, and an unpleasant environment for non-smoking students.

Once they begin using tobacco, adolescents see themselves as occasional users and rarely as regular "smokers." Adolescents are unreceptive to cessation programs because they vastly underestimate the power and speed of addiction to nicotine and the need for assistance in quitting smoking.





GRAPH 1: Percent of students who ever tried cigarette smoking, 1997-2003.⁴



GRAPH 2: Percent of students who smoked cigarettes on school property once or more in the past 30 days, 1997-2003.⁴

How Rhode Island Students Are Doing

According to the Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the percent of high school students who ever tried cigarette smoking has significantly

decreased in recent years (see Graph 1).⁴ In addition, the percent of students who smoked cigarettes once or more in the past 30 days also decreased. The percent of students who smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days during the past 30 days—an indication of heavier smoking—also decreased. Finally, the percent of students who smoked cigarettes on school property once or more in the past 30 days significantly decreased (see Graph 2).

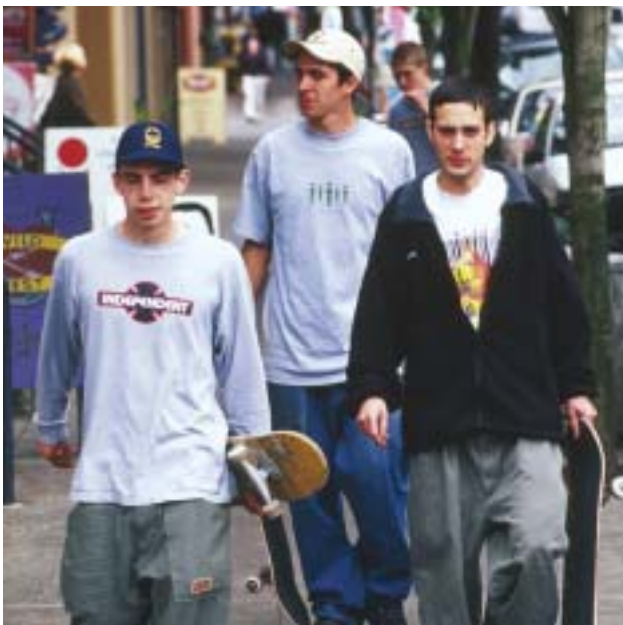
What Schools and Districts Can Do To Help Reduce Tobacco Use

Rhode Island and the nation have had great success in changing public attitudes and behaviors about smoking. Schools are uniquely suited to strengthen the trend against tobacco use. Schools and districts are encouraged to review their School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) survey data on student reports of smoking, chewing tobacco, and snuff in the past 30 days and to use these data to inform initiatives.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have made recommendations on the best approaches to ensuring tobacco-free environments in schools. These include:

- » Adopting science-based tobacco prevention curricula that provide information about tobacco-related health issues, targeting the tobacco industry, and that teach media literacy.
- » Strengthening and enforcing existing no-smoking policies on school property.
 - Prohibit the use of tobacco by students, staff, and visitors at all times.
 - Communicate policies on tobacco use through a variety of methods.
 - Develop written, school-specific procedures for enforcing policies on tobacco use.
 - Identify and provide education to those responsible for enforcement.
- » Providing cessation services in school. While it is challenging to encourage smokers to use cessation services, these programs provide youth with the support and skills they need to quit. Programs include brief interventions with groups and individuals to move youth closer to quitting.
- » Supporting tax increases on all tobacco products — a very powerful intervention. While the tax on cigarettes has been

For more information on the CDC's tobacco control recommendations, visit www.cdc.gov/tobacco/bestprac.htm



raised, taxes on other tobacco products like chewing tobacco have remained low.

- » Increasing tobacco prevention skills and knowledge among parents and other adults who have an opportunity to address tobacco use with students.