

Tobacco Surveillance Data Brief: *Tobacco Policies in New Jersey High Schools*

A joint effort between the Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) and the UMDNJ-School of Public Health, Center for Tobacco Surveillance and Evaluation Research (CTSER). CTCP is administratively located in the Public Health Services Branch, Division of Family Health Services

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School Tobacco Policies

In response to strong evidence that tobacco use begins in adolescence, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevention Tobacco Use and Addiction in 1994 (CDC, 1994). Included in the Guidelines is the recommendation that schools adopt a 100% tobacco-free policy prohibiting the use of all forms of tobacco by everyone in all locations on school grounds or by those attending school-sponsored events away from school property (CDC, 1994). Further, the Guidelines recommend that relevant stakeholders, such as school board members, school staff and unions, parents and students, should be active participants in the development and enactment of these policies (CDC, 1994).

In addition to the CDC Guidelines, there are two associated laws in New Jersey intended to encourage tobacco-free schools. The New Jersey state law NJSA 26:3D-17b requires schools to develop and enforce tobacco smoking policies on school grounds and the 2006 New Jersey Smoke Free Air Act (SFAA) requires smoke-free work environments and public spaces, including schools and school grounds. Although both laws were intended to establish smoke-free buildings, the laws are less specific about the ban of non-cigarette tobacco products, such as smokeless tobacco, the use of tobacco products by specific groups such as staff and school visitors, and where these products are banned (e.g., off-campus school functions, school vehicles, etc.)

The 2009 New Jersey School Tobacco Policy Survey (NJSTPS) assesses tobacco use policies in high schools throughout the state and provides an update to the 2005 NJSTPS (UMDNJ-SPH, 2006).

Among participating schools, almost all indicated they adopted a policy prohibiting tobacco use (97.8%). However, these policies varied in comprehensiveness. The table summarizes tobacco use policies prohibiting tobacco use by everyone. The majority of high schools had a ban in place for each type of tobacco product. Cigarettes were most likely to be banned (85.1%) and smokeless tobacco was least likely to be specifically banned (73.8%). Similarly, the majority of schools had a ban on all tobacco products during school (85.3%) and

Table 1: Tobacco policies in NJ high schools, 2009 NJSTPS

Type of Product Bans	%
Cigarettes	85.1
Cigars	81.4
Pipes	80.9
Smokeless Tobacco	73.8
Time Bans	
During School Hours	85.3
During Non-School Hours	83.4
Locations	
In School Buildings	88
On School Grounds	84.8
In School Vehicles	84.4
Off-Campus School Events	59.9
Advertising Bans	
School Buildings	89.2
School Grounds	89.2
School Vehicles	87.5
School Newsletters/Newspapers	86.8
School Events Sponsorship	88.4
Paraphernalia Bans	
Brand-Name Apparel/Merchandise	78.8
100% Tobacco Free	49.1

non-school hours (83.4%). Most schools banned tobacco products in school buildings (88%), on school grounds (84.8%), and in school vehicles (84.4%). Off-campus school events were the least likely location to have a ban on all tobacco products (59.9%). Overall, less than half of high schools (49.1%) reported a 100% tobacco-free policy, defined as prohibiting the use of all forms of tobacco by everyone in all locations on school grounds or by those attending school-sponsored events away from school property.

Overall, the majority of schools banned advertising in school buildings (89.2%), on school grounds (89.2%), in school vehicles (87.5%), in school newsletters and newspapers (86.8%), and during school sponsored events (88.4%). In addition, most schools banned the wearing of apparel and use of merchandise with tobacco brand-names or logos (78.8%). Just over half (54.5%) the schools reported posting signage indicating that the school was a “Tobacco Free Zone.” Although only about one in ten schools reported that there were tobacco advertisements within a 1,000 foot radius of the school, 40.4% reported at least one tobacco retailer was located within the same distance.

Distribution and Enforcement of School Tobacco Policies

Figure 1 summarizes the methods used by schools to distribute their tobacco policies to students and parents. Distribution refers to activities that make students and parents aware of the rules stated in the policy. Almost all schools distributed the policy to students in writing, either directly or via faculty or parents (98.5%). Similarly, just over nine out of ten schools made verbal announcements either directly to students or via faculty or parents (91.9%). About three out of four schools posted signs in locations that were visible to students. The distribution of the policy to parents was predominately in writing (96.7%), though the majority of schools also informed parents in interpersonal settings. Just over three out of five schools informed parents through a meeting between teachers and parents, or at other announcements at school events.

Figure 1: Methods of distributing tobacco policies to students and parents/guardians, 2009 NJSTPS

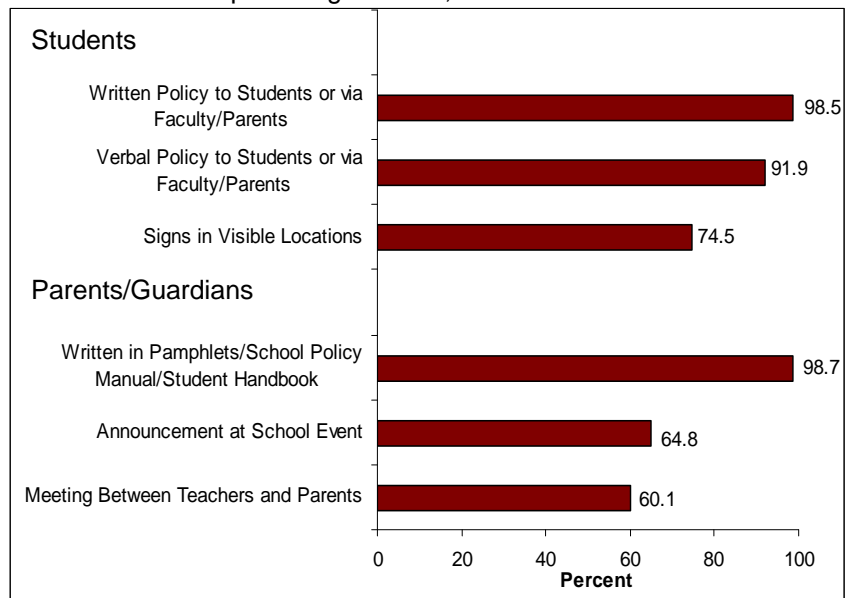
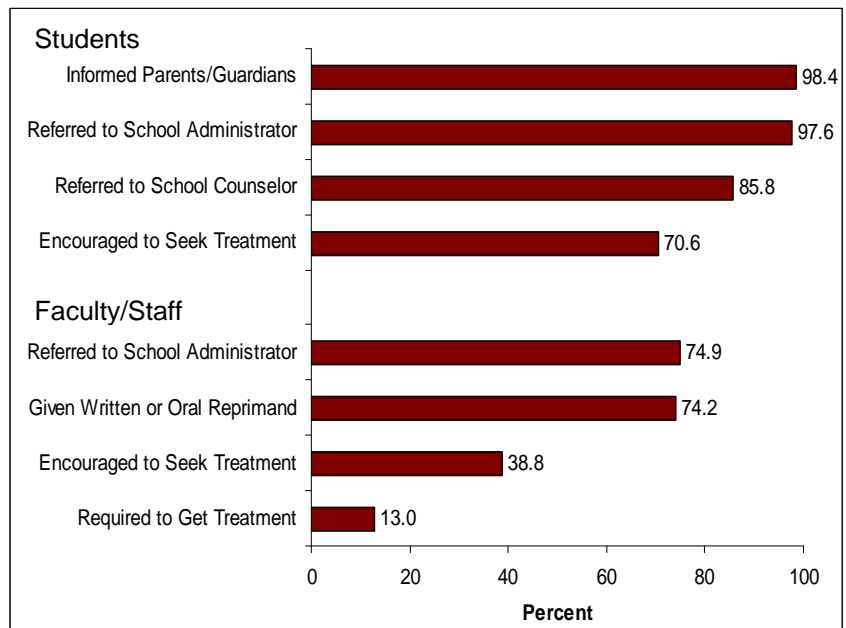


Figure 2 summarizes the four most frequently reported enforcement activities when students or faculty/staff violated a school's tobacco-free school policy. Schools were considered to be enforcing their tobacco policy if they reported *sometimes* or *always* enforcing one or more action(s) against students and faculty/staff caught using tobacco. Overall, schools were more likely to take action when students were caught violating the policy than if faculty or staff were caught. All schools reported enforcing the policy for students while just over four out of five reported the same for faculty. For students violating the policy, almost all schools reported that they informed parents or guardians (98.4%) or referred the student to a school administrator (97.6%). About three out of four schools reported referring faculty or staff members to a school administrator (74.2%) or issuing an oral or verbal reprimand (74.9%). Lastly, just under half (46.4%) of schools required students to attend a smoking cessation or education program, a directive much less likely to be given to faculty/staff (13%).

Figure 2: Methods of enforcing tobacco policy for students and faculty/staff, 2009 NJSTPS

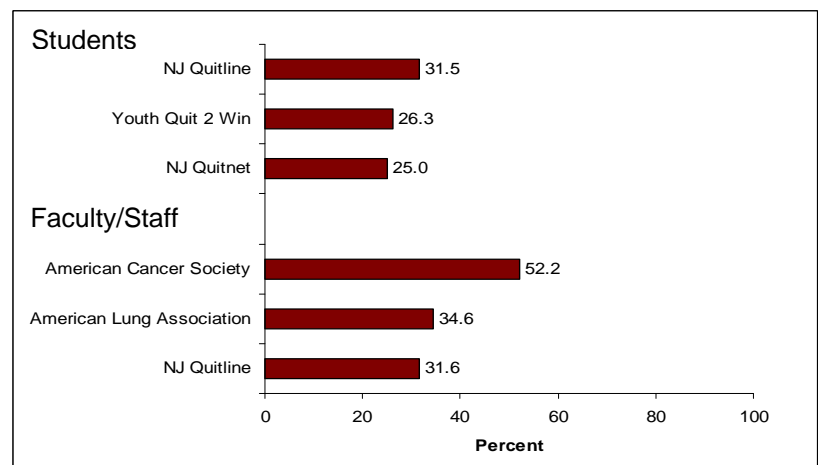


Program Offerings, Interest in Tobacco Prevention, and Referrals to Cessation Programs

The CDC recommends that schools should support cessation efforts among students and faculty/staff that use tobacco. Overall, 69.5% of schools reported offering at least one cessation program during the 2008-2009 school-year. The most frequently offered programs were life skills training (19.1%) and the American Lung Association's Not-On-Tobacco program (11%).

Figure 3: Program referrals for students and faculty/staff, 2009 NJSTPS

Overall, 34% of schools reported providing referrals to tobacco cessation programs for their faculty and staff and 60.1% of schools did the same for students. Figure 3 summarizes the four most common cessation program referrals for students and faculty/staff, respectively. Among schools that provided referrals to students, the New Jersey Quitline (31.5%) was the most frequently referred program, followed by



Youth Quit 2 Win (26.3%) and NJ Quitnet (25%). Among schools that provided referrals for faculty and staff, referrals to the American Cancer Society (52.2%) were most frequent, followed by the American Lung Association (34.6%) and NJ Quitline (31.6%).

The majority of schools reported that student (53.1%) and faculty (59.9%) interest in tobacco prevention and cessation had not changed since the 2004-2005 school year. However, just over one out of three schools reported student interest in tobacco prevention or cessation had increased, and just fewer than one out of three schools reported the same among faculty.

Future Recommendations

School policies that prohibit tobacco use by everyone in all locations and at all times send a powerful anti-smoking message to youth or young people. While the vast majority of high schools in New Jersey reported having a tobacco policy in place, **less than half reported 100% tobacco free policy**. Moreover, the proportion of schools adopting a 100% tobacco free policy is similar to 2005 (UMDNJ-SPH, 2006). Given the overall low rate of adoption of a comprehensive policy, efforts should be made to encourage schools to adopt these rigorous policies. Also, policies that are clearly articulated and consistently enforced can help prevent tobacco initiation among students (Grimes & Swisher, 1989). It is encouraging that almost all schools reported distributing the policy to students and parents in writing, and that all schools enforced the policy when students were caught in violation. However, although notifications to parents and school administrators might be effective, relatively few schools were providing referrals to evidence-based cessation resources. Schools should be encouraged to refer students and faculty to available cessation resources such as NJ's Quit services including Quitline, Quitnet, and Quitcenters. Further monitoring of school policies is warranted to detect changes in types of policies implemented and their enforcement, as well as program offerings to both students and faculty and staff.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Guidelines for school health programs to prevention tobacco use and addiction. MMWR, 1994; 43(RR-2); 1-18. Accessed on September 7, 2009 at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr4302.pdf>
- UMDNJ-School of Public Health (2006). Tobacco Surveillance Data Brief: Tobacco Policies in New Jersey High Schools, Volume 1, Issue 3.
- Grimes JD, Swisher JD. Educational factors influencing adolescent decision-making regarding use of alcohol and drugs. J Alcohol Drug Educ 1989; 35:1-15.

Methodology

The data in this brief are from the 2009 New Jersey School Tobacco Policy Surveys (NJSTPS). The aim of the NJSTPS was to document the prevalence of 100% tobacco-free policies in New Jersey public and private high schools. The NJSTPS was a paper and pencil survey mailed to all eligible high schools with an enrollment of at least 50 students. A senior-level school administrator, such as a principal or assistant principal, was instructed to complete the survey. The overall response rate was 80.1%. Vocational and technical high schools were excluded from this analysis.

For more information on the NJSTPS or the data reported in this brief, contact the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services at 609-292-9194, or visit their website at <http://www.state.nj.us/health/as/ctcp/index.html>

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