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National Report: Wisconsin Ranks 29th in Protecting Kids from Tobacco

Fifteen years after the 1998 state tobacco settlement, Wisconsin ranks 29th in the nation in funding programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit, according to a national report released today by a coalition of public health organizations.

Wisconsin currently spends \$5.3 million a year on tobacco prevention and cessation programs, which is 8.2 percent of the \$64.3 million recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Other key findings for Wisconsin include:

- Wisconsin this year will collect \$776.4 million in revenue from the 1998 tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but will spend just 0.7 percent of it on tobacco prevention programs. This means Wisconsin is spending less than a penny of every dollar in tobacco revenue to fight tobacco use.
- While Wisconsin's current funding for tobacco prevention is the same as the last two years, it represents a 65 percent cut from the \$15.3 million spent in 2009.
- The tobacco companies spend \$145.6 million a year to market their products in Wisconsin. This is 28 times what the state spends on tobacco prevention.

Wisconsin has been a leader in the fight against tobacco with a cigarette tax of \$2.52 per pack, a strong smoke-free workplace law and its tobacco prevention and cessation program. Since 2000, Wisconsin has cut smoking among high school students by 60 percent (from 32.9 percent to 13.1 percent who smoke). However, the state currently is spending only 8.2 percent of what the CDC recommends for tobacco prevention.

“Wisconsin has made tremendous progress in the fight against tobacco. But the state's gains are at risk unless it restores funding for programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit,” said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “Tobacco prevention is a smart investment that saves lives and saves money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs. States are being truly penny-wise and pound-foolish when they shortchange tobacco prevention programs.”

In Wisconsin, 13.1 percent of high school students smoke, and 5,000 more kids become regular smokers each year. Tobacco annually claims 7,200 lives and costs the state \$2 billion in health care bills.

Nationally, the report finds that most states are failing to adequately fund tobacco prevention and cessation programs. Only two states – Alaska and North Dakota – currently fund tobacco prevention programs at the CDC-recommended level.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death in the U.S., killing more than 400,000 people and costing \$96 billion in health care bills each year. Nationally, about 18 percent of adults and 18.1 percent of high school students smoke.

More information, including the full report and state-specific information, can be obtained at www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/settlements.