

Mini-Grants Boost Workplace Engagement for Smoke- and Tobacco-Free Policies

Summary

Three Somerset County employers recently decided to implement a more robust Smoke- and Tobacco-Free Policy. These policies provide their employees, volunteers, customers, clients, contractors, vendors, and visitors with safe and healthful environments and support everyone who wants to live tobacco-free.

Public Health Challenge

At 26%, Somerset County has the highest adult smoking rate in Maine (2021 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, www.countyhealthrankings.org). Breathe Easy Maine notes that tobacco use costs more than \$600 million in productivity losses each year. Smoke- and tobacco-free workplace policies are effective tools for protecting worker health, supporting employees who are trying to stop their tobacco use, reducing maintenance and insurance costs, and preventing employees and others from starting to use tobacco products.



Intervention

Somerset Public Health (SPH) offered \$250 mini-grants to encourage workplaces to dedicate time for tobacco policy upgrades amid post-pandemic planning. Staff recruited workplaces at networking meetings and through established relationships. Partnership interest surveys helped individualize our approach while a multi-faceted media promotion supported our efforts. New tobacco-free workplace graphics appeared in multiple social media posts. Our Facebook cover and our website's home pages featured a tobacco-free workplace image. The local monthly community newspaper and the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street organizations' e-newsletters received a write-up and photo. We created a QR code with a website landing page for inbound referrals. The graphics and QR code appeared on printed posters and slides for the local cable access TV station and public display screens. We ran promotional spots on a local radio station and used the audio for the soundtrack to a social media video.

"We greatly appreciate the partnership with SPH to develop a best level Tobacco and Smoke-Free Policy for the many employees, visitors and volunteers associated with SKILLS, Inc. SKILLS became a smoke-free worksite several years ago, but we know we have many employees who continue to choose to use tobacco products, and our goal is to ensure they have all of the resources at their fingertips to make an informed decision about tobacco usage. The \$250 grant was an added bonus that will be used to incentivize our employees in their journeys to become non-smokers."

- Lori Lefferts, SHRM-SCP, Director of Human Resources, SKILLS, Inc.



Results and Sustainability

SKILLS, Inc. employs 160, Family Violence Project 23, and The Bankery 21. These new Smoke- and Tobacco-Free policies in the workplace help normalize a tobacco-free lifestyle for staff and the people they serve. These environments reduce triggers for those trying to stop and protect all from exposures to unsafe secondhand smoke and the residual toxins that make up "third-hand" smoke. Collaborations with workplace leadership lay the foundation for ongoing partnerships, including future training programs to encourage regular, non-judgmental conversations about tobacco use and offer connections to treatment resources for those interested.

For More Information:

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