

MUNICIPAL SUCCESS

4 municipalities covering 7 county towns turn to smoke-free policies to create healthier environments for their constituents.



Obstacle

Recreation departments are a core part of continued youth development through the summer. Depending on the location, youth may learn important skills in areas such as swimming, sports, outdoor survival, crafting and so much more. They spend days at public beaches, and local parks where they can swing from monkey-bars and attempt to climb backwards up the slide. Summertime recreation is a place where children grow into young adolescents, and eventually become the teenagers and young adults that the next generation of youth will look up to as an example of who they may (or may not) want to be when they grow up. This is why we have placed such a high importance on encouraging municipal recreational parks and facility areas to become smoke-free or enhance their current policy to include current language. Not only for the health of all that attend, but to set a great example for the youth in our communities.

Summary

Through the pandemic, while working from home offices, the district tobacco prevention partners at Aroostook County Action Program made several attempts to contact local municipal offices via email. As some already know, email can be one of the more difficult ways to connect. If someone does not know that you are going to be reaching out in this way, it is not uncommon for unfamiliar emails to go directly to the junk email folder, or straight to the recycling bin. This is especially true if there is nothing to catch the eye of the intended audience. In an effort to make a connection and expand the reach of prevention to a much larger audience in such an important domain as the recreation departments at a municipal level, the partners took a step back and looked at what was already working for them in other domains. This is where the decision to connect with municipalities by sending mailings and giving them the time to sit and read something tangible became the best choice.

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“When the Towns of Mapleton, Castle Hill & Chapman needed to update their Smoking Policy to be current with the times, working with the team at ACAP, division of Tobacco Prevention was a natural choice.”

-Sandra Fournier
Mapleton, Chapman &
Castle Hill
Town Manager

How Did We Do It?

The successful response that ACAP's partners received as a result of mailing information to childcare providers, set the stage for a similar approach to contacting municipalities. The partners assembled packets which included a customized public place policy and resolution; a letter explaining the benefits of having a smoke free policy that is current and also features language matching the updates in current federal and state legislation; and the many ways that their local tobacco prevention partner is available to help.



When it comes to putting together information for policy outreach, we often find the most success in tools that have been beautifully crafted by Maine Health's Center for Tobacco Independence. This is why the team opted to customize the smoke free recreation resolution template to each municipality prior to sending the packets out. This gives town managers and selectpersons direct access to a comprehensive policy that will hopefully encourage policy updates for smoke free recreation areas, rather than overwhelm and cause for it to be pushed to a later time.

Conclusion

While there may still be a long way to go, this new approach led Aroostook County Action Program's tobacco prevention partners to make connections with four separate municipalities covering seven different towns and more than 5,170 county residents. It is not only our job, but our honor, to support those elected to serve and the residents who live here. As educators, we empower them in their desire to make our communities healthier for the youth that grow up in this beautiful county that we are so fortunate to call home.

"This is the second time that we have had a tobacco policy. We just updated the policy. The Board felt very strongly about it, and it gives the Town a tool to promote tobacco/smoke-free areas in the community. It sends a message to the community that the town cares. Our town places the signage at the Municipal Building, the playground, the Library, the Fire Station, public boat launch, and all other town owned properties."

-Jutta Beyer
Island Falls Town Manager

"This is going to be wonderful to keep the beaches and the parks clean for our kids."

-Larry Duchette,
Portage Lake Town Manager



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