

Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story: Community Expo Results in New Tobacco Policies

Summary:

After participating in the PenBay Business and Community Expo in Rockland on April 13, the Knox County Community Health Coalition (KCCHC) followed up with tobacco policy technical assistance to ten businesses, two health care organizations and two youth-serving organizations. By June 1, three model-level policies had passed as a result.

Challenges

Each employee who smokes costs employers about \$6,000 more annually than nonsmoking employees, primarily due to lost productivity and increased healthcare costs (CDC, 2016). Maine's *Workplace Smoking Act of 1985* requires that all enclosed work areas are smoke-free and that every employer must establish and post a written smoking policy that complies with current state law. However, many businesses need assistance in establishing policies.

"The value of working with wonderful partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and of participating in community events was validated with the number of policies passed and the increased visibility we achieved." Connie Putnam, Director of Community of Health Promotion, PenBay YMCA

KCCHC participated in the PenBay Chamber of Commerce Business and Community Expo with over 100 exhibitors and over 500 public attendees at the Samoset Resort in Rockland on April 13. To drive more traffic to the KCCHC table promoting workplace policies and Maine QuitLink, the KCCHC SNAP coordinator made smoothies for visitors.

In addition to providing materials and swag to the general public, KCCHC used the event to expand outreach to businesses and community organizations by sponsoring a policy mini grant drawing. KCCHC staff visited the booths with companies headquartered in Knox County, explained DTPP services, and collected a company business card to enter into a mini grant contest. Later, a card was drawn and that business was offered a \$300 mini grant to work with KCCHC to update its tobacco-free policy. Draft policies were prepared and sent to all businesses who submitted business cards. Mini grants and draft policies also were offered to the nonprofit organizations. Trekkers and the Herring Gut Coastal Science Center (two youth-serving organizations) and the philanthropic United Midcoast Charities have adopted new policies as a result.



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Results/Success

One workplace policy and two youth-serving organization policies have been adopted as a result of contacts made during the Expo. Policy technical assistance also continues with two health care organizations and ten businesses.