

A Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story, Understanding Tobacco Use Among Veterans

In the spring and summer of 2021, Maine Health's Center for Tobacco Independence enlisted Hart Consulting in a discovery project to understand more about tobacco use among Maine's veterans. The project engaged 112 individuals from 10 different veteran's networks, social clubs, and groups.

The full report can be viewed here: <https://ctimaine.org/facts/tobacco-reports/>

Veterans and service members use tobacco products more than non-veterans.

- US Census estimates from 2015 – 2019, show there are 103,772 veterans living in Maine, 9.5% of all people over the age of 18
- Nationally, 29.2% of veterans use tobacco.
- If we apply those rates to Maine, that means there are more than 30,300 veterans who use tobacco in Maine.



“I would rather a veteran helping me than a normal civilian because it’s more relatable.” - Focus Group Member

Key Findings:

- Veterans, service members, and VSO leaders agreed that tobacco use among veterans is an issue in their community
- Resources tailored to veterans work best
- Veterans are far more receptive when working with other veterans
- Indoor smoking at some social clubs will be difficult to change due to cultural barriers
- State and local veteran service organizations are willing to share resources

In Focus:

The discovery project highlighted the importance of working alongside community stakeholders, within communities, to make change.

Veterans helping veterans emerged as a best practice.

In Practice:

The information gathered during the project can be used to guide future strategy planning and implementation to reduce the number of veterans who use tobacco products and those who are exposed to secondhand smoke.

Striving to provide accessible treatment options that are catered to the needs of vets will be essential. The Center for Tobacco Independence is dedicated to assisting the veteran's community in this way.

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MaineHealth
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