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ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY IN BAY: A LOOK AT TOBACCO USE DISPARITIES



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Panama City, Fla. –The Florida Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida program and Bay County's Tobacco Program are launching a new initiative during the annual Tobacco Free Florida Week, taking place April 2 – 8. The theme, *Achieving Health Equity*, raises awareness of tobacco-related health disparities throughout the state.

More than 2.5 million adults in Florida are current cigarette smokers.^{1,2} In Bay, 17.1 percent of adults are current cigarette smokers,³ which is higher the statewide average of 15.5 percent. Although that is the case, rates have come down from 25.7 percent in 2013.⁴ The health burden of tobacco use remains especially high among racial and ethnic minorities, low-income individuals, the LGBT community and those with mental health conditions.⁵ Significant progress has been made in lowering tobacco use, but addressing these disproportionately affected groups still using tobacco at higher rates is a top priority.

"The Bay County Tobacco Program this year began teaching youth in programs at Emerald Coast Behavior about tobacco and its connection with mental health," said Heather Kretzer, DOH-Bay's Tobacco Program Manager, "We have also connected substance use recovery programs with Big Bend AHEC's tobacco cessation services. We will continue our efforts to achieve health equity for those who are at high risk for tobacco use."

For years, tobacco companies have spent billions of dollars each year to market their products that appeal to more vulnerable and less fortunate populations.^{6,7} Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in Florida and the United States.⁸ Health communications, community and cessation interventions and youth prevention efforts are still needed to discourage tobacco use initiation and counter social norms among subpopulations affected by tobacco-related disparities.

Residents in Bay County can access Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way program for free tools and services to help them quit. More than 188,000 Floridians have successfully quit tobacco using one of these free services. For more information, please visit tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway.

**Editor's Note: Tobacco Free Florida's and Bay County's Tobacco Program's assistance with local tobacco free policy efforts are not lobbying, but are services to build awareness and support of jurisdictional voluntary initiatives to improve the health of Floridians.*

About Tobacco Free Florida Week

The tenth annual Tobacco Free Florida Week takes place from April 2 – 8. Join the conversation on social media using #FLHealthEquity.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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About Tobacco Free Florida

The department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since the program began in 2007, more than 188,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there was 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs.⁹ To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services, visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com](#) or follow the campaign on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida](#) or on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla](#).

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¹ 16,469,339 Florida adults: Florida QuickStats. U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Department of Commerce <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/FL/AGE115210#viewtop>

² 15.5 percent (or 2,552,747) Florida adults smoke were current cigarettes: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Prevalence and Trends Data, 2016. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.

³ University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings 2018.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data, Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Best Practices User Guide: Health Equity in Tobacco Prevention and Control*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2015.

⁶ US Department of Health and Human Services. Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: US Dept of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 1998.

⁷ US Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: US Dept of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2012.

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

⁹Mann, Nathan M, Nonnemaker, James M., Thompson, Jesse. "Smoking-Attributable Health Care Costs in Florida and Potential Health Care Cost Savings Associated with Reductions in Adult Smoking Prevalence." 2016.