



Capital District  
Tobacco-Free  
Communities



ST PETER'S HEALTH  
PARTNERS  
Community Health Programs

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Lauren Sears, [lauren.sears@sphp.com](mailto:lauren.sears@sphp.com), 518-419-0815

## **Local tobacco control programs educate state lawmakers on substantial progress and unmet needs**

*NYS Tobacco Control Program is funded at just 1.6% of the state's annual tobacco revenue.*

**ALBANY, N.Y. (Feb. 7, 2023)** – Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities and St. Peter's Health Partners, partners of the [New York State Tobacco Control Program \(NYS TCP\)](#), are meeting with state lawmakers at the Capitol today to discuss how tobacco control efforts have successfully decreased New Yorkers' tobacco use and smoking-related deaths and disease. However, substantial unmet needs remain as 28,200 adult New Yorkers still die every year from smoking.<sup>i</sup>

NYS TCP's policy-driven, cost-effective, and evidence-based approaches contributed to a substantial decline in tobacco use in recent years. For example, tobacco control partners have assisted public, affordable and market-rate property owners transition over 44,000 multi-unit housing units to be tobacco-free for the health and safety of residents. Also, during that time, Health Systems for a Tobacco-Free New York assisted 163 medical health care organizations and 152 mental health care organizations in implementing processes that ensure every patient is screened and treated for tobacco dependence during their appointment.

The average adult smoking rate in New York State is now 12%,<sup>ii</sup> down from more than 23% in 2001,<sup>iii</sup> and the youth smoking rate is down to 2.4%<sup>iv</sup> from 27.1% in 2000<sup>iv</sup>. However, smoking rates remain high among certain demographic groups. Activities are now focused on communities and populations with high tobacco use rates, including: adults who report frequent mental distress; adults with less than a high school education; adults with an annual household income of less than \$25,000;<sup>ii</sup> adults enrolled in Medicaid,<sup>ii</sup> and adults living with a disability.<sup>ii</sup>

In addition to those adult New Yorkers who die each year from smoking, another 750,000 suffer with smoking-related illness. Moreover, 280,000 New York youth currently under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking.<sup>v</sup> And, vaping, or e-cigarette use, is still dangerously high. Nearly one in four

high-school-age youth in New York State vape/use e-cigarettes,<sup>v</sup> the most used tobacco product among youth.<sup>vi</sup>

**“Teenagers should never be using e-cigarettes,”** said Erin Sinisgalli, Director, Community Health Programs. **“There’s a lot of concern in the public health world about what ingredients are actually in e-cigarettes.”**

For decades, the tobacco industry has used menthol and sweet flavors in tobacco products, making them more appealing to youth. They have also heavily marketed menthol cigarettes to the African American and LGBTQIA+ communities, making it more likely that African American and LGBTQIA+ smokers will suffer from smoking-related diseases and death. The reason is simple: Menthol makes it easier to start smoking and harder to quit.

**“We know that menthol, along with sweet, fruity flavors in tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, make tobacco products taste better and feel less harsh on the throat, making them more appealing and easier for young people to use,”** said Jeanie Orr, Program Manager, Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities. **“Flavors also create the impression that these products are less harmful than they really are,”** added Orr.

Learn more about [The Human Cost of Tobacco in New York State](#).

### **State Tobacco Revenue vs. Tobacco Funding**

The CDC recommends a \$203 million annual investment in New York State’s Tobacco Control Program.<sup>vii</sup> However, New York invests just \$39 million, which is 1.6% of the state’s annual tobacco revenue of \$2.36 billion.<sup>vii</sup> Nevertheless, support is available for New Yorkers who want a tobacco-free life.

**“Quitting on your own is very hard,”** Sinisgalli noted. **“But research shows that when health care clinicians discuss tobacco use and offer patients treatment and support, it increases the likelihood of success by 30 percent. Even brief discussions – lasting less than three minutes – is effective.”**

The New York State Smokers' Quitline is another excellent resource for New York State residents who wish to overcome tobacco use, including e-cigarettes. Free offerings include individualized coaching and assistance with quit-planning from highly trained tobacco treatment specialists, text and online chat support and free shipping of stop-smoking medications such as nicotine patches, nicotine lozenges or nicotine gum for those 18 and older. Residents of all ages may contact the Quitline for support and educational materials. In addition, the Quitline encourages teens and young adults (ages 13-24) to text “DROPTHEVAPE” to 88709 to join “This Is Quitting,” a free texting support program for help with

quitting vaping. Visit [nysmokefree.com](https://nysmokefree.com) anytime for more information or call 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) seven days a week, beginning at 9 a.m.

**About Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities:** Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities (CDTFC) is a NYS Bureau of Tobacco Control grant-funded program held by St. Peter's Health Partners. CDTFC works to increase support for New York state's tobacco-free norm through youth action and community engagement. Efforts are evidence-based, policy-driven, and cost-effective approaches that decrease youth tobacco use, motivate adult smokers to quit, and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke. Visit [www.smokefreecapital.org](https://www.smokefreecapital.org) for more information.

**About Community Health Programs:** Community Health Programs, a division of St. Peter's Health St. Peter's Health Partners, works with healthcare providers, school districts, businesses, public health stakeholders and communities to improve the health and well-being of patients and community members. Through several grant-funded initiatives, we offer programs that encourage healthy eating habits, improved physical fitness, provide breastfeeding support, and offer tobacco dependence treatment. Visit [healthprograms.org](https://healthprograms.org) for more information.

---

<sup>i</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in New York. January 2023. [https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/new\\_york](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/new_york) (Accessed 1/26/23)

<sup>ii</sup> BRFSS Number 2022-12 Cigarette Smoking New York State Adults 2020. [https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/2022-12\\_brfss\\_cigarette\\_smoking.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/brfss/reports/docs/2022-12_brfss_cigarette_smoking.pdf) (Accessed 12/27/22)

<sup>iii</sup> New York Tobacco Control Program, Cigarette Smoking in New York State reaches historic lows. StatShot Vol. 2, No.10/Oct. 2009 [https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco\\_control/reports/statshots/volume2/n10\\_adult\\_smoking\\_at\\_historic\\_lows.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control/reports/statshots/volume2/n10_adult_smoking_at_historic_lows.pdf) (Accessed 12/27/22)

<sup>iv</sup> Bureau of Tobacco Control StatShot Vol. 14, No. 3/Sept. 2021, Milestones in Tobacco Use. [https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco\\_control/reports/statshots/volume14/n3\\_milestones\\_in\\_tobacco\\_control.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control/reports/statshots/volume14/n3_milestones_in_tobacco_control.pdf) (Accessed 12/27/22)

<sup>v</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, The Toll of Tobacco in New York, Oct. 2022. [https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/new\\_york](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/new_york) (Accessed 12/14/2022)

<sup>vi</sup> Centers for Disease Control, More than 2.5 Million Youth Reported E-Cigarette Use in 2022, Oct. 6, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p1007-e-cigarette-use.html#:~:text=Addressing%20Youth%20Tobacco%20Product%20Use&text=Using%20nicotine%20during%20adolescence%20might,tobacco%20product%20among%20U.S.%20youth.> (Accessed 12/14/22)

<sup>vii</sup> Centers for Disease Control: Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs. Section C: Recommended Funding Level, by State: New York, Page 110. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/guides/index.htm> (Accessed 12/27/22)