

Executive Summary

Helping Young Smokers Quit: Identifying Best Practices for Tobacco Cessation

Helping Young Smokers Quit: Identifying Best Practices for Tobacco Cessation was a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) that ran from 2001 through 2009. Researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health:

- Located and created an inventory of 756 tobacco-cessation programs for people ages 12 to 24 and surveyed 591 of those programs regarding their content, format, sponsoring organization, and characteristics of people served
- Evaluated 41 smoking-cessation programs serving youth ages 14 to 18 to identify factors associated with recruitment, retention and quit rates
- Identified and described programs that were sustained over time and those that were discontinued

In July, 2001, the RWJF Board of Trustees authorized the program for up to \$8 million for four years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) co-funded the program.

Read the full report. Learn more about the program here.

CONTEXT

There were at least 4 million smokers under age 18 in 2000. Although many young smokers wanted to quit, little was known about what strategies or programs would work best for them. Most evaluations of youth cessation programs were tightly controlled

studies in which interventions were evaluated under optimal conditions. Less was known about the effectiveness of programs delivered in real-world settings.

THE PROGRAM

RWJF established *Helping Young Smokers Quit: Identifying Best Practices for Tobacco Cessation* to identify, survey, and describe tobacco-treatment programs available to youth and to evaluate youth-oriented cessation programs. RWJF Senior Scientist Tracy Orleans, PhD, says, "Most research to this point had been done in laboratories in which someone designed and compared two programs ... We wanted to look at programs already existing in the real world ..."

Helping Young Smokers Quit consisted of three phases:

- In Phase I, researchers inventoried 756 smoking-cessation programs and surveyed 591 of them to determine their location, the population they served, and how accessible they were.
- In Phase II, researchers evaluated 41 programs to understand what factors were associated with recruitment, retention, and smoking quit rates.
- In Phase III, researchers determined how many programs identified in the inventory were operating three years later and identified new programs that had emerged in order to understand characteristics associated with sustainability.

OVERALL PROGRAM RESULT

"Through *Helping Young Smokers Quit*, we demonstrated the feasibility of evaluating existing programs outside of a tightly structured randomized controlled trial," said the program directors, Susan J. Curry, PhD, and Robin J. Mermelstein, PhD. "We developed a uniform, replicable process for finding and evaluating programs. We believe that this methodology could be used to identify and evaluate other real-world programs, such as weight control programs, as well."

KEY FINDINGS

Program Directors Curry and Mermelstein reported the following key findings in several journal articles, at conference presentations and in a personal interview:

• Surveyed programs displayed considerable homogeneity. Most were multisession, school-based group programs that served a modest number of youths per year.

Program content included the same cognitive-behavioral elements found in evidenced-based adult programs, along with content more specific to adolescence.¹

- There was little association between the content of a program and its outcomes, most likely due to the homogeneity of the programs.²
- Community-based, real world, teen smoking-cessation programs that use evidence-based curricula and have written training manuals have outcomes equivalent to outcomes found in more tightly controlled, laboratory-type studies.³
- By the end of the 41 evaluated programs, 74 percent of participating youth had tried to quit smoking and 14 percent had been abstinent for seven days.⁴
- When surveyed one year after entering a smoking-cessation program, 12.5 percent of youth reported they had not smoked within the prior 30 days.⁵
- When they completed the program, youth who were mandated into the treatment program had the same abstinence rates as youth who entered voluntarily, but mandated youth were less likely to be abstinent at the 12-month follow up. 6
- There were few prospective predictors of program sustainability. The primary factor differentiating sustained from discontinued programs was demand for the program.

AFTERWARD

Helping Young Smokers Quit ended in 2009. As of April, 2012 researchers had published 14 journal articles based on the program.

¹ Curry SJ, Emery S, Sporer AK, Mermelstein R, Flay BR, Berbaum M, Warnecke RB, Johnston T, Mowery P, Parsons J, Harmon L, Hund L and Wells H. "A National Survey of Youth Tobacco Cessation Programs." *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(1): 1–7, 2006. Available online.

² Curry SJ, Emery SL, Mermelstein RJ, Sporer AK, Lee J, Segawa E, Pugache O and Berbaum M. PowerPoint[®] Presentation. "Multi-level Predictors of Successful Quitting Behavior Among Adolescents in Community-based Smoking Cessation Programs." Available online.

³ Personal interview

⁴ Curry SJ, Mermelstein RJ, Emery SL, Sporer AK, Berbaum ML, Campbell RT, Flay B and Warnecke RB. "A National Evaluation of Community-Based Youth Cessation Programs: End of Program and Twelve-Month Outcomes." *American Journal of Community Psychology*. Published online March 2012. Available online.

⁵ Curry SJ, Mermelstein RJ, Emery SL, Sporer AK, Berbaum ML, Campbell RT, Flay B and Warnecke RB. "A National Evaluation of Community-Based Youth Cessation Programs: End of Program and Twelve-Month Outcomes." *American Journal of Community Psychology*. Published online March 2012. Available online.

⁶ Curry SJ, Emery SL, Mermelstein RJ, Sporer AK, Lee J, Segawa E, Pugach O and Berbaum M. PowerPoint[®] Presentation. "Multi-level Predictors of Successful Quitting Behavior Among Adolescents in Community-based Smoking Cessation Programs." Available online.

⁷ Curry SJ. PowerPoint[®] Presentation. "Predictors of Sustainability for Community-based Adolescent Smoking Cessation Programs." Available online.

In 2008, the NCI awarded a five-year grant to Curry and Mermelstein for a four-phase study. It has allowed them to examine the Internet as a means to engage young adults ages 18 to 24 into Internet-based treatment and to track the long-term outcomes of young adults who participate.

Program Management

National Program Office: University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health

Program Directors: Susan J. Curry, PhD, Dean of the College of Public Health, University of Iowa and Robin J. Mermelstein, PhD, Director, Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health