

## Partnering With Education and Job and Training Programs for Sustainable Tobacco Control Among Baltimore African American Young Adults

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### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

- We sought to gain insight from program leaders and staff who are responsible for education and job training programs for unemployed African American young adults in Baltimore City about the creation of successful community-based tobacco control initiatives.

### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Cigarette smoking remains the leading preventable cause of both morbidity and mortality in the United States. Young adults (18 to 24 years old) smoke more than people in any other age group, but have been largely ignored because there has been a tendency for public health to focus either on preventing children from starting to smoke or helping long-time smokers to quit.
- Unemployed young adults have been particularly overlooked.
- We interviewed program leaders who are already working with this potentially hard-to-reach population to better understand how tobacco fits within the overall context of young adults' lives.
- We seek to create effective and sustainable tobacco control programs for young adults who are particularly susceptible to initiating and continuing smoking.

### WHAT ARE THE FINDINGS?

- Cigarette smoking is not universally seen as a pressing problem for these young adults, and there may even be some belief that smoking is an effective way to reduce stress.
- Young adults in education and job training programs are primed to making meaningful change in their lives. The focus on meaningful change may be a real opportunity to address tobacco use, if cessation can be identified as a meaningful and important goal.
- Adult mentors and role models are vital to young adults' success in making meaningful changes and need to be a part of any tobacco control program. This should include some support for creating smoke-free communities, as well as smoking cessation for any participants and mentors who smoke.
- Success will be dependent on the integration of tobacco control into the larger context of young adults' lives. Control programs need to factor in that the participants are also often dealing with issues such as homelessness, drug abuse, low educational achievement and job skills, and becoming parents.
- Cigarette smoking continues to have some perceived value in training programs because it is seen to facilitate group solidarity.

## WHO SHOULD CARE MOST?

- City and state health departments.
- Tobacco control program staff.
- Individuals who are working with young adults who are not in college or working.
- Participants/young adults in education and job training program.
- Academe/researchers and educators
- Cancer Control Coalition at local, state, and national levels.
- Program staff or educators who work with young adults.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Establish a smoke-free community as “meaningful” to all those involved in education and employment training programs—leadership, staff, and participants.
- Identify adults who serve as “caring adults” for program participants.
- Provide tobacco control information and smoking cessation support (if necessary) as part of the overall training programs.
- Provide tobacco control information via innovative and participatory approaches.
- Find alternatives to smoking for facilitating group solidarity and reducing stress in employment and education training programs.
- Integrate effective support for smoking cessation into various change initiatives in training programs.
- Build capacity of program leaders and participants to advocate for change and design educational campaigns for a smoke-free community.