

Helping Young Smokers Quit: Prevalence and Characteristics of Youth Cessation

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Teens and young adults use tobacco at rates as high as or higher than adults. Ninety percent of teen smokers express interest in quitting smoking, and nearly 75 percent have made a quit attempt. While a growing number of teen cessation programs are available, there is currently no way to determine, even approximately, how many programs exist, where they are located, what services they offer, what populations they serve, or by what means they provide treatment. Moreover, only a handful of such programs have been evaluated.

The Helping Young Smokers Quit (HYSQ) initiative is a 4-year, two-phase project designed to address the dire need to develop and disseminate effective, developmentally appropriate cessation programs for the substantial numbers of adolescents who smoke and try unsuccessfully to quit. Phase I of the HYSQ initiative was developed to identify and characterize existing smoking cessation programs for youth in a representative sample of 408 counties in the United States. Counties were stratified by four criteria (i.e., urbanization, socio-economic status, youth smoking prevalence, and state-level tobacco control expenditures) and selected with probability proportion to size (i.e., youth population, 10-24 years old). Through a snowball sampling process starting in four county "sectors" (i.e., departments of health, departments of education, voluntary organizations, and other known program supporters), program informants were identified within each of the sampled counties and a 45-minute telephone-administered survey was completed.

The Helping Young Smokers Quit initiative is developing the largest and most comprehensive database on existing youth smoking cessation programs in the United States. This presentation will summarize snowball sampling results from more than 9,000 key informant interviews and describe program characteristics from 398 surveys that have been completed through May 2003.