



The Best of the West: Educating, Training, and  
Collaborating on Tobacco Control  
September 8-9, 2006

# **Tobacco Cessation with Inmate Populations**

# Experiences in Pinal County

**Assisted three private prisons with policy development to become smoke-free. Provided cessation classes during the transition for staff. Provided cessation for inmates prior to transition. Educated staff about the behavior likely to manifest itself during withdrawal**

**Provided technical support to the Arizona State Prison Central Unit during transition to becoming a smoke-free facility. Educated staff about withdrawal symptoms. Staff can smoke in designated areas at this facility.**

**On-going cessation programs at the Arizona State Prison for inmates. Serving the following units: East and North, and the three units in the Eyman complex, Meadows, Rynning and Cook.**

**Assisted Homeland Security (INS) with the transition to becoming tobacco-free as part of a worksite wellness activity.**

**Provide nicotine addiction education classes at the Juvenile Detention Center on an on-going basis.**

# Curricula Options:

- **The Pinal County Division of Public Health developed a 6 session intensive curricula with input from inmates. This curricula is designed to be used in facilities that house long-term inmates, allow tobacco use, or are in the process of becoming smoke-free.**
- **The National Commission on Correctional Health Care, in collaboration with the National Network on Tobacco Prevention and Poverty has developed a curricula to be used in short-term facilities (such as jails) and facilities that are smoke-free.**



# Why work with correctional facilities?

- Eager participants, ready to learn and change.
- Reach all adult demographics.
- Change perceptions about addictions.
- Circumstances may contribute to low attrition.
- Inmates are parents and will eventually return to their homes.
- Inmates have the time to work on quitting.



# Challenges:

- Scheduling can be difficult. Staff turnover is common.
- All materials and facilitators must be approved. Approval takes tenacity.
- Evaluation is challenging because reaching inmates for follow up is difficult.
- Facilitators must be flexible, upbeat and thick skinned.

# Lessons in Prison Culture

- Language and customs are standard institution. (IE: “CO” and number for staff, “Miss.” or “Mr.” designation for volunteers.)
- Your best recruitment tool is a success story.
- NRT/medications are typically not available to inmates. (Discuss anyway.)
- Tobacco plays a different role in correctional facilities: it may be used as currency and for social purposes.

# Lessons in Prison Culture....

- Inmates often use whatever is inexpensive or available. They may switch back and forth from chewing/spit tobacco to cigarettes. Most use roll-your-own to save money.
- The prison's definition of "smoke-free facility" may vary from yours.
- The reason for going smoke-free may have little or nothing to do with health promotion.

# Lessons learned about staff:

- Attitude may be hostile if staff feel threatened by a smoke-free policy.
- Double standard (staff deserve services but not inmates).
- Lack of understanding about withdrawal symptoms.
- Lack of sympathy (a result of training).
- The facility may allow staff to continue smoking in designated areas.
- The facility may not ban chewing/spit tobacco.

# Contributors to relapse

- Lack of social support
- Self medicating for BOREDOM
- Missing friends and family
- Cellmate(s) may continue to use
- Stress caused by a lack of control over surroundings, home issues, etc.
- Tobacco use is the common social thread

# What works...


- Meeting more than once a week is more effective.
- Recognize that family and friends are important to the quitting process. Discuss ways to involve family.
- Need for things to keep hands busy (crosswords, word searches, etc.) Voracious readers – bring lots of materials.
- Stress the health consequences of secondhand smoke on family and loved ones.
- Use graphic videos whenever possible.
- An upbeat attitude and good jokes are really appreciated.
- Being an “outsider” is an advantage. You gain instant credibility

# A word of advice...

- **Do not become discouraged by a high relapse rate. Many class participants will take the class several times until they are able to quit.**
- **If you are unsure about how something works inside a correctional facility ask.**
- **Leave all your preconceived notions about inmates and/or prisons at the door.**

# Resources:

- View the results of a nationwide survey of prisons, jails and juvenile correctional facilities at: [www.nntpp.org](http://www.nntpp.org)
- A complete guide to becoming a smoke-free facility is available on-line at: <http://hsc.unm.edu/epiccpro/jailtitle.html>
- To request in-service materials to assist staff in recognizing withdrawal symptoms that may manifest in behavioral changes, e-mail: [Alice.Shukri@co.pinal.az.us](mailto:Alice.Shukri@co.pinal.az.us)



For further information about  
inmate cessation or to obtain a  
copy of the curricula, contact:

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