



South Carolina

Smoke-Free Program Blends Faith and Healthy Lifestyle

“After he attended a M.E.S.S. program at Moncks Corner Baptist Church, Jacob tried quitting again. He has now been smoke-free for 6 months.”

—Dorothy McCray, parish nurse, Moncks Corner Baptist Church

Public Health Problem

Jacob, a 62-year-old African American man from Moncks Corner in the Lowcountry region of South Carolina, tried his first cigarette as a teenager and smoked for more than 40 years. He tried to quit many times, but was never successful.

Jacob is not alone in South Carolina, where one in five adults smokes, and tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and premature death. In addition, 800 South Carolinians die annually from secondhand smoke exposure, and 70% live in an area not covered by smoke-free laws. Tobacco use costs South Carolina more than \$1 billion in health care expenses each year.

Taking Action

To address these health and economic concerns, public health advocates in South Carolina’s Lowcountry region, which includes the state’s central and southern coastal counties, combined forces to reach out to a key population, the African American faith community. Best practices in tobacco control recommend community-level interventions that work with different types of partners, including faith communities and minority groups.

In 2009, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control’s

Region 7 Public Health Office used funding from CDC’s Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant to partner with a faith-based, nonprofit group called Hold Out the Lifeline: A Mission to Families. One of this group’s initiatives is the Mothers Eliminating Secondhand Smoke (M.E.S.S.) program, which promotes tobacco-free policies in homes, vehicles, and faith-based settings.

Adoption of tobacco-free policies is a strategy proven to improve the health of entire populations, protect people from secondhand smoke exposure, encourage smokers to quit, and deter young people from beginning to use tobacco.

During FY 2009, the tobacco health educator working in the Region 7 Public Health Office helped participating churches

- Host educational sessions for youth and adults on the dangers of tobacco use.
- Develop and adopt a 100% tobacco-free policy that bans tobacco use in buildings and on church grounds.
- Get members to commit to not smoking in their homes and vehicles.
- Put up no-smoking signs and educational posters on church grounds.

Healthy People Objective
Culturally appropriate community health promotion programs

PHHS Block Grant Funding
Represents 10%–49% of total program costs



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Taking Action (continued)

- Refer smokers to local cessation services and the state's tobacco quitline.

Impact

After Jacob attended a M.E.S.S. program at Moncks Corner Baptist Church, he tried quitting again. He has now been smoke-free for 6 months.

Other successes of the M.E.S.S. program include the following:

- Leaders from more than 25 churches in the Lowcountry region's Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester counties were trained to use the program in their churches. As a result, more than 2,000 residents were educated about the harmful effects of tobacco use and secondhand smoke.
- More than 500 people signed pledges to keep their homes, vehicles, and faith-based institutions smoke-free.

- Eighteen churches adopted tobacco-free policies on their campuses.
- Tobacco-free policies at the church level get local leaders involved and build a foundation for community-wide laws. Not only do such policies help to reduce heart disease and lung cancer rates by eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke, they also prompt smokers to quit, which can reduce the negative effects of tobacco use on many chronic diseases.

Officials in the Region 7 Public Health Office and members of Hold Out the Lifeline led the way through every step of the Lowcountry's smoke-free journey. Thanks to their efforts, thousands of South Carolinians will have a chance to live disease-free for years to come.

For more information on the PHS Block Grant, go to www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant

For more information on Healthy People, go to www.healthypeople.gov



PHS Block Grant Supports South Carolina's Healthy People Priorities

The PHS Block Grant provides flexible funding that states can use to prevent and control chronic diseases, respond quickly to outbreaks of infections and waterborne diseases, and address their specific public health needs and challenges. States can align their programs with any of the Healthy People objectives.

South Carolina uses its funds to address the following three health objective priorities:

- Culturally appropriate community health promotion programs.
- Rapid prehospital emergency care.
- Rape or attempted rape.

For a complete list of funded health objectives for all grantees, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant/statehprior.htm>.