

Taking Local Tobacco Control to the Next Level: re-engaging schools and communities in policy action

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Abstract: So much progress has been made in Washington State tobacco control that local health advocates may wonder: “what is left for me to do?” This presentation will describe new or remaining options for action and fresh messages to engage partners in school and community-based tobacco control. Tobacco policies are an important tool to help schools achieve their primary mission of education. Tobacco policies and procedures that offer comprehensive content, and which are consistently and equitably enforced, are evidenced as one of the most effective ways to address and decrease tobacco use among students. Despite great progress in Washington, much work remains to be done in tobacco-free school policy. This session will highlight the experience of a school district in Pierce County, Washington that implemented a policy improvement project through funding from the Washington State Dept. of Health Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. Examples of model policies will be also be explored. Significant opportunities also remain to improve community policy implementation or enforcement to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, limit the influence of tobacco industry advertising, and reduce youth access to tobacco products. We will summarize the evidence of effectiveness and measures of quality for different policies, describe the role of different community organizations in promoting these policies, and evaluate Washington communities’ progress to date.