

Expanding Smokefree Communities

Community Profiles:

South Carolina

Community Overview

The American Lung Association of the Southeast (South Carolina) is partnering with the Free Medical Clinic in Columbia, South Carolina to establish a system that will help make it easier for patients in Richland and Lexington Counties to get help with quitting smoking. The Free Medical Clinic provides quality health care, at no cost to residents of the community who cannot pay for such care and who do not have health insurance. Recognizing the importance of tobacco use intervention in this population, the American Lung Association of the Southeast approached the Free Medical Clinic to develop and implement a system within the clinic to identify tobacco users, assess their stage of change, provide brief advice on the need to quit and provide a referral to tobacco cessation services.

Health Equity Focus

While the Free Medical Clinic serves individuals from 22 counties around the state of South Carolina, this project will focus on Richland and Lexington Counties. Those individuals from Richland and Lexington Counties account for 98 percent of their patients, and many are uninsured. It is estimated that two-thirds of the patients that obtain services from the clinic are tobacco users.

Community Demographics

South Carolina has a total population of 4,723,839.¹ The counties (Richland and Lexington) that make up 98 percent of the patients that use the clinic's services have populations of 393,830 and 270,406 respectively.² The Free Medical Clinic is located in an urban area in downtown Columbia. There are three hospital systems located within a reasonable distance from the facility. Those that seek services from the Free Medical Clinic are often unemployed, below the poverty level and/or uninsured. Furthermore, Lexington County has an unemployment rate of 7.8 percent compared to the state level of 10.3 percent.³ Richland County has an unemployment rate of 9.2 percent.⁴ According to the U.S Census Bureau: American Fact Finder, the total number of families living below the poverty level in South Carolina is 12.7 percent. Richland County has a 10.9 percent rate of families living below the poverty level and Lexington County has a rate of 8.7 percent.⁵

Burden of Tobacco Use – The Challenge

Health Issues and Costs

Smoking causes heart disease, stroke, multiple cancers, respiratory diseases and other costly illnesses. The age-adjusted lung cancer incidence rates for Lexington and Richland Counties were similar in 2006-2010 at 73.5 and 74.0 per 100,000, respectively. This was higher than the national rate but similar to South Carolina's overall rate.⁶ In 2011, the adult smoking rate in the Columbia, South Carolina metropolitan area, which includes Richland and Lexington Counties, was 21.2%, similar to the rates for the national and South Carolina.⁷ Approximately 17 to 18 percent of the Lexington and Richland County population under the age of 65 are without health insurance,⁸ and 58 percent accessing services from the Free Medical Clinic have been unemployed at some point in the year. Each patient from the Free

Medical Clinic typically has no insurance and their household income is at or below 133 percent of the federal poverty level. Consequently, there were many individuals who could not afford to visit the doctor. The percent of adults who could not see a doctor in the past 12 months due to cost in Lexington County was 16 percent and 13 percent in Richland County.⁹ In these counties, there is a strong correlation between socio-economic status and smoking rates, as individuals from low-income populations are more likely to smoke, but less likely to have access to health services or quality care.

Advancing Health Equity in Low Income/Uninsured Populations- The Opportunity

Research proves that in order for these smokers to have the best chance at success, a combination of counseling and use of the seven FDA-approved medications is the best solution. In fact, tobacco use treatment positively impacts quitting success rates. The Free Medical Clinic has programs already in place devoted to high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity, but has no dedicated tobacco cessation program. Community leaders have come together to supplement the Free Medical Clinic's services by offering tobacco dependency treatment in other community settings such as the Lexington Medical Center hospital. These community offerings include the American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking® (FFS) program. Furthermore, the hospital has committed to provide FFS without cost to the Lexington County patients of the Free Medical Clinic, with the understanding that treating tobacco dependency may help reduce their own expenditures for the uninsured. In addition, the South Carolina Tobacco-Free Collaborative will provide free telephone counseling services to these most vulnerable patients.

The American Lung Association of the Southeast and the Free Medical Clinic have already assembled an impressive coalition of organizations and community leaders to help improve health equity within this community. These organizations include:

- City of Columbia, South Carolina
- University of South Carolina School of Medicine
- Lexington Medical Center
- South Carolina Tobacco-Free Collaborative
- Providence Hospital
- Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)
- National REACH Coalition
- Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority
- Providence Hospital

If you would like to find out more or get involved with the educational efforts underway in Richland and Lexington Counties, please contact Melissa Goforth, Area Manager of the Southeast/Midlands Region, at MGoforth@LungSC.org.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/45000.html>

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/45/45079.html>

³ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings, 2013. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app#/south-carolina/2013/measure/factors/23/map>

⁴ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings, 2013. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app#/south-carolina/2013/measure/factors/23/map>

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013.

http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12_5YR/DP03/0500000US45063%7C0400000US45

⁶ U.S. National Institutes of Health. National Cancer Institute: [State Cancer Profiles](#). Accessed February 5, 2014.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011. [SMART: City and County Data](#).

⁸ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings, 2013. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app#/south-carolina/2013/measure/factors/85/map>

⁹ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings, 2013. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app#/south-carolina/2013/measure/additional/87/data/sort-0>