

Expanding Smokefree Communities

Community Profiles:

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Community Overview

The *Milwaukee Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Initiative* Leadership Team is employing an evidence-based educational model to tackle the serious health consequences of tobacco use and regular exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) for residents of multi-unit housing, particularly low-income Milwaukee residents in subsidized housing. These residents are disproportionately exposed to SHS and face medical and health consequences due to significantly high smoking levels in this population and an inability to escape SHS in their homes. The CTG Leadership Team in Milwaukee is providing education and resources to multi-unit housing owners and managers on the economic and health benefits of voluntary smokefree multi-unit homes.

Health Equity Focus

The vast majority of Milwaukee multi-unit housing properties do not have comprehensive smokefree rules. While Wisconsin's smokefree air law covers common areas of multi-unit housing, it does not include private living quarters. Therefore, even a family that maintains its own no smoking policy in their apartment can easily have secondhand smoke intrusions from neighboring units

Burden of Tobacco Use – The Challenge

Adult Smoking Rates

Tobacco is the number one cause of preventable death in Wisconsin. 7,000 Wisconsinites die each year from tobacco-related illnesses. Tobacco costs Wisconsin nearly \$4.5 billion annually in health care costs and lost worker productivity.¹ In the City of Milwaukee, 23.8% of adults 18 and older smoke, higher than both the state and national averages of 19.5% and 19.4% respectively. Each year, approximately 15% of all deaths in the city of Milwaukee are attributable to smoking. Cigarette smoking causes 80% of all lung cancer deaths and 17% of deaths from cardiovascular disease in the city of Milwaukee.²

Secondhand Smoke Exposure in the Home: A Health Equity Issue

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that exposure to secondhand smoke causes 3,400 lung cancer deaths and 46,000 deaths from heart disease annually in the US.³ Exposure to secondhand smoke in the home among Wisconsin children is 40% higher than the national average.⁴ Public housing residents in Milwaukee are regularly exposed to tobacco smoke coming from other residents. The toxic smoke travels freely throughout the buildings with very serious health consequences. While people with financial means can move or afford smokefree housing, often, people in public housing do not have this choice. In Milwaukee, nearly 4,000 families, including 1,449 elderly/disabled currently are on a waiting list for subsidized housing, further reducing smokefree living options for those who wish to avoid secondhand smoke exposure.⁵

Advancing Health Equity through Tobacco-Free Living – The Solution

This project aims to increase the availability of smokefree housing options for low-income multi-unit housing residents, who are disproportionately exposed to dangerous secondhand smoke and face significant medical and health consequences as a result of this exposure. In June 2012, the American Lung Association in Wisconsin received a sub-award from the American Lung Association National Headquarters under the Expanding Smokefree Communities, Community Transformation Grants program to work with new and existing partners in Milwaukee to educate multi-unit housing owners and managers of the economic and health benefits of voluntary smokefree policies. These members include

- Community Advocates
- The Wisconsin African-American Tobacco Prevention Network/ Jump at the Sun LLC
- UMOS, WI
- WI Tobacco Prevention and
- Poverty
- Network/Salvation Army
- YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee
- City of Milwaukee Health Department
- The Westlawn Partnership for a
- Healthier Environment
- Hispanic/Latino Tobacco Prevention Network

If you would like to find out more or get involved with the educational efforts underway in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, please contact Dona Wininsky, Director of Public Policy & Communications, at the American Lung Association at Dona.Wininsky@lungwi.org.

¹ Burden of Tobacco in Wisconsin, 2010

<http://sep.uwcarbone.wisc.edu/downloads/Documents/programbriefs/The%20Burden%20of%20Tobacco%20Report%202010.pdf>

² Ibid

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses—United States, 2000–2004](#). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. November 14, 2008; 57(45):1226–28.

⁴ Exposure to Secondhand Smoke in Wisconsin Housing,

http://sep.uwcarbone.wisc.edu/downloads/Documents/program_policy_reports/ETS_in_homes.pdf

⁵ Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee <http://www.hacm.org/programs/index.htm>