

45 Railroad Street
Lee, MA 01238

Tel: 413-243-5540
Fax: 413-243-5542
Email: tritownhealth03@adelphia.net

**Tri-Town Health Department
Lee ~ Lenox ~ Stockbridge**

**Tobacco Control Training/Certification Program
August 22, 2007**

Abstract

On September 20, 2003 the Massachusetts Department of Public Health released data indicating a high level of tobacco use by minors including pregnant teens in Berkshire County particularly in the City of Pittsfield. This remains a major public health challenge despite routine compliance checks, state recommended retailer trainings and correction action against store owners for violations of state and local regulations.

Response

In an attempt to break this unacceptable level of tobacco use among minors, the Tri-Town Health Department/ Tobacco Awareness Program staff have identified a number of actions that we believe if initiated will significantly reduce the sale of tobacco products to minors.

Strategy

Various meetings with Local and State public health members have been key in the formulation of an Action Plan. Informational meetings and public hearings are scheduled for October to provide all stakeholders including tobacco retailers, sales clerks and Board of Health an opportunity to comment. In addition, we plan to utilize press releases and radio interviews to embrace our community outreach efforts. Regulations will be developed to incorporate the certification process and will include amended corrective action levels. Implementation will be affective January 1, 2008. Additionally, there will be a grace period of 6 months after the implementation of regulation (July 1, 2008), that retailers will have to get all clerks certified. The Tobacco Awareness Program will start offering trainings in September, giving all retailers ample time to get their staff certified. The current retailer training will be tweaked to the extent of incorporating a movie with real-

life scenarios, reformatting the current power point presentation, including a study guide, an exam component and a wallet sized certification card.

Methods

The first objective was to meet with collaborative communities to get their ideas and input on proposed Action Plan. Participant communities include Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge and Pittsfield. The listed communities are working together and are willing to institutionalize an approved Action Plan. We have formed a subcommittee including various community tobacco retailers to review and comment on the action plan and provide recommendations. This subcommittee was an essential part of developing a community partnership with all stakeholders. Key methods of implementation are as follows:

1. **Regulation:** Amend existing Youth Access Regulations to strengthen training component which would require all sales clerks selling tobacco to pass a basic 10 question competency exam.
2. **Certification:** All sales clerks completing the exam with a passing rate of 80% will be issued a 3-year certification confirming their knowledge of regulations and ability to not sell tobacco products to minors.
3. **Tobacco Sub-Committee:** Formation of an 8 member tobacco sub-committee consisting of tobacco retailers, local public health agencies and Boards of Health. The committee will discuss topics like regulations, retailer training and tobacco education.
4. **Sample:** For the purposes of the initial Action Plan the target audience includes the communities of Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge, Pittsfield and the tobacco retail permit holders and tobacco sales clerks in those communities. We hope to expand into the surrounding communities once analysis of the Action Plan comes back positive. The catchment area will include approximately 90 tobacco permit holders and approximately 900 tobacco sales clerks.
5. **Analysis:** Critical data analysis of the Action Plan will be preformed 1 year after the initial implementation. During this time at least 3 compliance checks will be completed to determine initial effectiveness of program.

Implementation

Amended Youth Access Regulations: Please see attached