

State-Based Disability & Health Program

California Department of Public Health

Tobacco Cessation Program for People with Disabilities

Public Health Issue

In the United States, smoking prevalence is 50% higher among people with disabilities (PWD) than among their counterparts without disabilities. In California, that percentage is 30% higher than the national average. Smoking can significantly increase the possibility of serious health conditions such as heart disease, emphysema and lung cancer. Quitting can increase overall circulatory functions that are critical for people with limited mobility. People with disabilities in California must be considered a priority audience for smoking cessation efforts.

Program Overview

California's *Living Healthy with a Disability Program: Tobacco Cessation Program for People with Disabilities* serves a critical role in providing needed services to people with disabilities who are not usually targeted in state health promotion efforts. In 2009, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the California Smokers' Helpline (Helpline) began a collaboration to reach more PWDs.

Activities included:

- Coordinating training for Helpline staff on how to work with PWDs.
- Facilitated revisions to Helpline materials and programmatic standards to ensure accessibility.
- Collaborating with disability organizations and health care insurers to disseminate Helpline information to clients with disabilities.
- Evaluating the project in concert with Helpline management (e.g., collecting, tracking, and analyzing data).

Making a Difference

The Helpline is now fully underway in California and addressing the specific needs of people with disabilities who smoke. Efforts include:

- Ongoing assessment of Helpline program and materials to ensure continued effectiveness.
- Training Helpline staff on how best to work with people with disabilities.

Of the 400,000 total callers to the Helpline since 2009, an estimated 38% have at least one disability. Daily call volume average is approximately 200 calls. Counselors at the Helpline have a range of educational backgrounds, from bachelor's degrees to master's degrees. A licensed psychologist oversees all clinical work.

Shaping Tomorrow

Helpline management is planning to become a Tobacco Cessation Center of Excellence for People with Disabilities and provide training to other states on comprehensive cessation services.

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