

Integrity House Update

Integrity has now joined the pioneers who have made the commitment to address and treat tobacco dependence on par with alcoholism and other drug dependencies. On January 1st, Integrity House became a tobacco-free campus; tobacco use is not permitted in program buildings or on the grounds. As a therapeutic community, Integrity's treatment philosophy is based on the concept of facilitating change through peer pressure and role modeling. Alison Schwartz, MPH, MSW, Director of Prevention Services at Integrity House describes it as "self help, mutual help." Change begins with a segment of the community initiating the process. The rest of the community then joins in the effort and the change becomes a community project.


A nicotine committee of staff volunteers was formed to spearhead the process of addressing tobacco. The results of their discussion filtered out into the greater Integrity community. Alison says this process has been thought-provoking for staff, most of whom have begun the paradigm shift towards giving tobacco parity with other drugs of abuse. A number of staff and clients indicated they were relieved that smoking was being addressed. She notes that a number of staff have begun to address their own tobacco

use; some have quit smoking while others are either contemplating or preparing to quit. Integrity has taken a positive approach, one of support as opposed to chastisement, with those who struggle with tobacco dependence. Alison says, "Staff feel supported that they don't 'have to' stop, but know they cannot smoke during their shift. Tobacco dependence is viewed by us as part of the disease concept—as an illness or disease; therefore, we treat it with a medical model rather than chastisement." Their supportive stance is reflected in the tremendous support staff provide to their colleagues who have quit their tobacco use and the continued support of those who still struggle with quitting.

Integrity moved in stages towards its tobacco-free goal, allowing staff and clients to adjust to the change. Integrity began implementing "smoke free" days on campus and gradually increased them in number. Ultimately residents were told that effective January 1st they could not smoke while in the program. To ease the discomfort of physical withdrawal, Integrity permits use of nicotine replacement therapy in the form of the patch if it is prescribed by a doctor and approved by Integrity. The client or the client's family covers the cost of the patch. Integrity runs

psychoeducational groups specific to tobacco issues as well as a weekly support group for clients. Although it is not possible to monitor client behavior 24 hours a day, Alison said it appears that most residents are complying with the new policy even when off campus. Client violations of the policy result in a therapeutic intervention in which the client receives a contract and the violation is used as a learning experience.

Families of the residents were also prepared in advance. The family therapist began talking about the rationale behind the upcoming policy change a few weeks before the actual tobacco-free date. Families were encouraged to show their support of the client's progress in dealing with tobacco by not bringing tobacco to the facility.

When asked what she has learned from her experience and would like to share with others, Alison responded that although the actual process is not as easy as it sounds in theory, becoming tobacco free can be accomplished with careful planning and commitment. While it can be frustrating at times, one needs patience. She also stressed the importance of being both positive and supportive of staff and clients. 

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Freehold Township High School Tackles Tobacco Use By Students


Through collaboration by the administration, the student assistance counselor, and the Freehold Municipal Alliance, coupled with innovative interventions with students who use tobacco, Freehold Township High School has developed a comprehensive tobacco policy for students and a program for intervening with students who use tobacco. In 1997, at Freehold Township High School, there were 170 violations of the school's tobacco policy. As of January 2001 the number has dwindled to 30. This is a decline of 82%.

Kathleen Andrejco, Student Assistance Counselor (SAC), believes the decline is a combination of administrative support for tobacco control, and policy enforcement efforts. The school increased supervision at lavatories, implemented a quit-smoking program and fostered parental involvement with this very important issue. Current policy states students are not allowed to use tobacco in the building or on school grounds or during school-sponsored events. Students who violate the policy receive a one-day suspension and a mandatory re-entry conference that a parent must attend. Vice-Principal Linda Jewel is committed to conducting re-entry conferences, because parental involvement with their child's tobacco use often results in reduced future incidents. This is congruent with research that shows parental involvement has the greatest impact on young people's tobacco use. At the time of re-entry, the

student is mandated to take part in two educational sessions relating to tobacco led by the SAC. Ms. Andrejco later conducts a formal assessment of the student's tobacco use. Students who express a desire to quit using tobacco are then referred to the school's quit-smoking program, Stop Tobacco Use Now (STUN), which was

developed with support from the Freehold Township Municipal Alliance. This voluntary nine-session program is facilitated by the SAC during school hours and includes tips for quitting. Ms. Andrejco reports that many people credit the STUN program with significant reduction in student violations. She, however, credits the more complete initiative of policy, commitment from school administration and the involvement of students' parents as some reasons for the positive results experienced at her school.

We commend Freehold Township High School for their commitment and foresight in addressing tobacco policy as well as treating students' tobacco use.

For information and tips on implementing a quit-smoking program in your facility, or for assistance in developing tobacco policy, please contact our staff at the Tobacco Dependence Program. 

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