

# Quit Smoking Support for High School Students

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Last spring the Tobacco Dependence Program, through the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, piloted Quit Smoking Support Groups for young people in several high schools throughout the State. These pilot groups were designed to provide support to young smokers who want to quit.

The Tobacco Dependence Program and school staff launched recruitment for students. A variety of methods were used, including tobacco-awareness assemblies and advertisement of the group on closed circuit television. In addition, the Tobacco Dependence Program conducted staff training on tobacco dependence and the importance of offering quit smoking services to students, which in turn resulted in word-of-mouth referrals from teachers, coaches and counselors.

The groups were modeled after similar quit smoking groups available at the Quitcenters in New Jersey. While this model is effective in helping adults quit smoking, important modifications were made to meet the needs of young people. For example, the groups were conducted during the school day in order to foster attendance among students who are often busy with extra-curricular activities after school. In addition, non-smoking support buddies were invited to participate in the group. The buddy's role was to provide support for smoking friends during the week or on the weekends during the quit attempt. Students who are part of a quit smoking group may be concerned about the stigmatization by teachers and coaches with knowledge of their participation in the group. Allowing buddy participation can help to alleviate this concern. Medications, such as nicotine patch or gum, were not used in the group. Although medications were not an integral part of the group process, students who expressed a need for medication were advised to contact their physician or local Quitcenter for assistance.

The groups were run on a weekly basis over a period of six weeks, and were held during rotating class periods throughout the school day. An assessment was conducted with each student individually prior to the start of the groups. In addition, students had their carbon monoxide levels checked during the assessment and prior to each group meeting.

School staff were instrumental in arranging for the group meetings at their respective schools. Staff recruited students, procured space for the group, obtained consent forms, and interfaced with teachers and other school staff to facilitate student attendance. Staff also observed and assisted with facilitation of the groups.

Evaluation of this pilot project is in progress. We anticipate reporting the results in the near future. In the meantime, new groups were started this fall, which will add to the data already collected.

If you are interested in learning more about this project or if you are interested in having a Quit Smoking Support Group at your school, please contact Mia Zimmermann at 732-235-8230 or [mia.hanos@umdnj.edu](mailto:mia.hanos@umdnj.edu)

