

Massachusetts Senate Approves Smoking Ban

Closing out this year's legislative session, the Massachusetts Senate approved a bill that would ban smoking in public places, including restaurants, taverns, and nightclubs, the Boston Globe reported November 20, 2003.

"It's one of the most concrete victories for workers' health and public health that we've seen in Massachusetts in a long time," said Diane Pickles, executive director of Tobacco-Free Massachusetts, an advocacy group.

Under the measure, violators of the ban could face fines of up to \$300. The bill exempts nursing homes, private clubs, fraternal organizations, and cigar bars.

Prior to the statewide ban, about 100 cities in Massachusetts, including Boston, had adopted some form of smoking ban in public places.

The Massachusetts House of Representatives passed the ban a month ago. Minor differences between the House and Senate bills need to be worked out in committee. The ban is expected to take effect July 5, 2004 if approved by Gov. Mitt Romney.

Tobacco Dependence Treatment Provider Certification

by Michael Burke, EdD, MHS

Effective tobacco dependence treatment can provide significantly more health benefits at a lower cost than most other behavioral health interventions or medical treatments. Unfortunately, the millions of smokers who try to quit each year are bombarded with misinformation and advertisements for a variety of "cures" that in many cases are nothing more than bogus, expensive, and ineffective treatment scams.

We know from clear and compelling research what works and what does not work for helping smokers to quit successfully. The evidence has been compiled by the United States Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control, and is available in the volume *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: A Clinical Practice Guideline* (PHS Guidelines).¹ This and other evidence-based tobacco treatment resources can be accessed at http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco/tr eating_tobacco_use.pdf.

The huge public health consequences, in terms of both mortality and morbidity, of continued tobacco use and failed treatment efforts make it imperative that valid and effective treatments are available to consumers seeking to become tobacco-free. Professional groups and state boards can assure the public that tobacco treatment professionals have met a standard in quality of practice by providing training, certification and licensing based upon proven practices. A number of states and national efforts have already begun addressing this issue.

In New Jersey, more than 150 behavioral health and medical professionals have completed prerequisites and training to be qualified as Tobacco Dependence

Treatment Specialists (TDTS). The criteria for becoming a TDTS were developed collaboratively by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, national expert reviewers, tobacco treatment professionals and the University of Medicine and Dentistry School of Public Health Tobacco Dependence Program, which are described in the *New Jersey Guidelines for Tobacco Treatment*.² The New Jersey guidelines outline prerequisites and training objectives that must be met before a health-care provider is considered a tobacco dependence treatment specialist. These include evidence-based tobacco-specific assessment, counseling, and treatment knowledge and skills. Discussions are currently underway in New Jersey regarding the creation of a professional or state certification for tobacco treatment professionals.

A number of states have developed Tobacco Treatment Certifications. Two that have been reviewed in the literature are the Massachusetts Tobacco Treatment Specialist Certification Program³ and the Arizona Tobacco Cessation Skills Certification.⁴ Both of these certifications require extensive training based upon the PHS Guidelines and offer a Specialist training similar to that provided in New Jersey. Both states have a two-tier certification: one that covers basic skills in tobacco treatment and a second that provides more extensive treatment specialist training. Arizona also offers a more advanced tobacco treatment program manager certification.

To protect consumers, the messages regarding effective tobacco treatments need to be loud and clear. We know what works. Specialist training that prepares

professionals in the provision of evidence-based treatment should be the quality standard for all those who profess to provide tobacco treatment. With the current cacophony of quit smoking advertisements, we need to provide clear direction toward valid treatments and qualified treatment providers for those consumers who want help in becoming tobacco-free.

If you are interested in learning more about the Tobacco Dependence Treatment Specialist Training offered by the Tobacco Dependence Program, please visit our website, www.tobaccoprogram.org. If you would like to be involved with the tobacco treatment certification process in New Jersey, please contact Dr. Burke for more information at: michael.burke@umdnj.edu or 732-235-8225.

1. Fiore, M. C., Bailey, W. C., Cohen, S. J., et al. (2003). *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence. Clinical Practice Guideline*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service.
2. New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (2001). *New Jersey Guidelines for Tobacco Dependence Treatment*. Available at www.tobaccoprogram.org/NJ_Guidelines.pdf.
3. Pbert, L., Ockene, J. K., Ewy, B. M., Leicher, E. S., & Warner, D. (2000). Development of a state wide tobacco treatment specialist training and certification programme for Massachusetts. *Tobacco Control*, 9 (4), 372-381.
4. Muramoto, M. L., Connolly, T., Strayer, L. J., Ranger-Moore, J., Blatt, W., Leischow, R., & Leischow, S. (2000). Tobacco cessation skills certification in Arizona: application of a state wide, community based model for diffusion of evidence based practice guidelines. *Tobacco Control*, 9 (4), 408-414. 