



The 2012 Surgeon General's Report: Budget Implications for New York

We ask your support for significantly increased funding for the state's Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program.

The Centers for Disease and Prevention recommends that New York fund its tobacco prevention efforts at a consistent level of \$254 million a year. For three years, the program was funded in the range of \$85, but in the past three years has been repeatedly cut and in the current fiscal year is budgeted at only \$41.4 million. The Governor proposes cutting the Program's budget again, to \$36.4 million.

On Thursday March 8, U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin issued a 900 page report, [Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults](#). As with all Surgeon General's reports, going back to the first one in 1964 that declared smoking causes cancer, the latest report's conclusions represent the consensus of scientific opinion. This report had seven editors and 43 authors, almost all from academic institutions outside the government.

The report finds that, despite all that has been done in the past 15 years, the prevalence of tobacco use in the United States has declined only marginally because the tobacco industry continues to recruit young, new smokers to replace adults who quit or die. In 2008, tobacco companies spent \$10.5 billion in the US promoting their products, a 50% increase since 1998. The report concludes that "The evidence is sufficient to conclude that there is a causal relationship between advertising and promotional efforts of the tobacco companies and the initiation and progression of tobacco use among young people."

With regard to prevention, the report says, **"There is a large, robust, and consistent evidence base that documents known effective strategies in reducing the initiation, prevalence, and intensity of smoking among youth and young adults."**

The report finds mass media campaigns particularly effective: **"Evidence indicates that mass media campaigns can be one of the most effective strategies in changing social norms and preventing youth smoking. Influential and successful campaigns contain a number of essential elements including optimized themes, appropriate emotional tone, appealing format, clear messages, intensity, and adequate repetition. There also is strong evidence that media ads designed for adults also decrease the prevalence of smoking among youth."**

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The report specifically endorses programs such as the New York State Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program: “Numerous studies over many years have consistently concluded that comprehensive state tobacco control programs that include a range of coordinated and complementary strategies have been effective at not only reducing tobacco use by youth and young adults, but also have resulted in overall reductions in smoking prevalence and concomitant decreases in state spending on tobacco-related health care.”

The report concludes, **“Providing and sustaining sufficient funding for comprehensive community programs, statewide tobacco control programs, school-based policies and programs, and mass media campaigns must be a priority.”**

At its current funding level, New York’s Tobacco Control Program cannot deliver the mass media campaigns identified in the report as most effective in cutting teen tobacco use, nor can its school and community-based programs reach more than a small number of at-risk children. In other words, it is no longer the comprehensive program that contributed to falling tobacco use rates between 2006 and 2010.

To the extent it does not provide adequate funding, the state postpones the day when New Yorkers will no longer have to deal with the health and economic burden of tobacco use.