



NEWS RELEASE

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BURSTEIN NOTES DOWNWARD TREND IN TEEN TOBACCO USE

Local Numbers Mirror National Trend; Areas of Concern Remain

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein called attention to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) describing a downward trend in tobacco usage among middle- and high-school students. To assess current tobacco use among youths, CDC analyzed data from the 2011 National Youth Tobacco Survey (“NYTS”). NYTS is a school-based, self-administered, pencil-and-paper questionnaire given to middle school (grades 6-8) and high school (grades 9-12) students to collect information on key tobacco control outcome indicators used to monitor the impact of comprehensive tobacco control policies and programs.

Respondents to the study were asked about their use of cigarettes, cigars (including cigarillos and “little cigars”), smokeless tobacco, pipes, bidis (small brown cigarettes wrapped in a leaf), and kreteks (clove cigarettes) within the last 30 days.

“It is encouraging to see that overall rates of tobacco use are decreasing among middle and high school students,” **said Burstein**. “This shows that tobacco control policies and programs are having an effect on teen smoking rates, but more needs to be done, particularly in restricting tobacco sales to youth.”

Tobacco use continues to be the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States, with nearly 443,000 deaths occurring annually because of cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.¹ Moreover, nearly 90% of adult smokers begin smoking by age 18 years.² During the years 2000-2011, prevalence of tobacco declined for both middle school and high school students. Among middle school students, current tobacco use declined from 15% to 7%; current combustible tobacco use declined from 14% to 6%; and current cigarette use declined from 11% to 4%. Among high school students, current tobacco use declined from 34% to 23%; current combustible tobacco use declined from 33% to 21%; and current cigarette use declined from 28% to 16%.

Buffalo Public Schools, participants in the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report (“YRBS”), report responses similar to national trends. Over 10% of BPS middle school students report having tried cigarettes, but fewer than 1% report being habitual smokers (smoked on 20 or more days during the 30 days prior to taking the survey). However, among those middle school students who do smoke, nearly 10% are able to purchase their own cigarettes. Among BPS high school students, fewer than 5% report habitual smoking, which is 32% below the state level and 54% below the national level. Among high

¹ CDC. Smoking-attributed mortality, years of potential life lost, and productivity losses-United States, 2000-2004. MMWR 2008; 57:1226-8

² US Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing tobacco use among youth and young adults. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2012. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2012/index.htm

school students who do smoke cigarettes, one-quarter report being able to purchase their own cigarettes, which is 56% higher than the national average.

Burstein added, “It is alarming that such a large percentage of both middle school and high school students report being able to buy their own tobacco products.”

New York State Public Health Law (Section 1399-cc) prohibits the sale of tobacco products, herbal cigarettes, rolling papers or pipes to individuals under eighteen years of age. NYS law also allows local regulation of tobacco industry promotions, sampling, and display of tobacco products in commercial establishments. Additionally, New York is one of 38 states requiring all establishments selling tobacco products over the counter and by vending machine to be licensed. Effective, population-based strategies for preventing tobacco use among youths are outlined in the World Health Organization’s MPOWER package³ and CDC’s *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs – 2007*.⁴ Continued efforts to reduce tobacco marketing and advertisement that affect youths might have further impacts on preventing tobacco use.

For more information on Erie County Health department programs visit

<http://www2.erie.gov/health/>

For more information on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

To access the New York State smoker’s quitline visit

<http://www.nysmokefree.com>

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³ World Health organization. WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2008: The MPOWER package. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2008; Available at http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/mpower_report_full_2008.pdf

⁴ CDC. Best practices for comprehensive tobacco control programs – 2007. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2007. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/best_practices/index.htm