Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

The Positive Impact of Anti-Smoking Media Campaign on Teens in 200 Words

Adolescent Health & Well-Being

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In recent decades, anti-smoking campaigns have been a key method to warn the public about the harmful truth of tobacco products, prevent teenagers and young adults from ever starting and help smokers quit. These campaigns are especially important for adolescents as nearly 9 out of 10 cigarette smokers start before age 18, forming early dependencies early that lead to devastating health problems later in life.

In February 2014, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) started an anti-smoking campaign called "The Real Cost," which initially targeted cigarette use by youth 12-17 years old. Since then, the successful campaign has run on TV, radio, print, web and social media and has expanded to chewing tobacco and, soon, e-cigarette prevention.

An analysis of these ads from the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* estimated that in two years, their efforts saved $31 billion in smoking-related costs for youth, their families and society overall. Additionally, researchers estimated that the campaign prevented 350,000 teens from being smokers, 50,000 more than the FDA's already bold goal. This study demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of anti-smoking public health campaigns, returning savings of $128 for every dollar invested.

This impressive success is attributed to the extensive research and evaluations performed by the FDA before and during the campaign to fully understand the audience and base message. I believe this study reinforces the importance of evidence-based policies and programs and early prevention efforts, as well as analyzing the efficacy of public health campaigns.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Strategy & Communications Manager Lauren Walens.

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