

Meeting Minutes of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Prevention Subcommittee October 19, 2023, Approved

Attendees:

Tahnee Bryant, Tammy Collins, Juliana Curry, Nancy Hoffman, Elizabeth Shahan, Nikki Tennis

Opening:

Tahnee Bryant provided welcome and opening remarks of this meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Prevention Subcommittee. The meeting was called to order on Thursday, October 19, 2023 and was conducted by Zoom conference. A quorum was not present to approve September meeting minutes and they were tabled for the next subcommittee meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce guest speakers, Christina Mickey and Julianna Curry, and to review top three priority areas for 2024 planning.

Agenda Items:

Christina Mickey and Juliana Curry (Coalition for Tobacco Free WV)

- Smoking rates in West Virginia, which have traditionally been the highest in the nation, have seen a decrease over the years. The state now has the highest rate of youth smoking and COPD, as well as the second-highest rate of adult smokeless tobacco use.
- The prevalence of tobacco use in pregnant women is exceptionally high in West Virginia, particularly among those with low socioeconomic status and limited education.
- All West Virginia residents bear the financial burden of smoking through annual healthcare costs, Medicaid expenses, productivity loss (such as missed workdays), and tax contributions.
- The tobacco industry's influence in West Virginia is substantial, with significant marketing expenditures of 9 billion dollars nationwide and 100 million dollars in the state.
- West Virginia has consistently fallen short of the recommended annual spending of around 27 million dollars on tobacco prevention, and funding has been decreasing due to shifts in political power.
- Common tactics employed by the tobacco industry include preemption, which favors federal rules over local regulations, and has been inserted into many rules and regulations. Local

authorities have been combating this but have run into various control over issues like plastic bag bans and minimum wage rules.

- During the early stages of the smoke-free movement, many states were subject to preemption, making it difficult for them to enact stricter laws than state or federal levels. Once preemption is established, it becomes challenging to reverse.
- West Virginia was the only state to have county-wide smoke-free regulations. However, the cessation of funding for tobacco prevention and grassroots efforts has made it challenging to enforce these rules, especially in bars and gaming establishments. The law has also been updated to include vaping devices.
- Certain demographics, including blue-collar workers, 18-24 year-olds, single mothers, and patrons of entertainment facilities, bars, and gaming establishments, have fewer protections against exposure to tobacco smoke.
- In 2022, a bill was passed to grant local governments oversight of health department rules. Local Boards of Health can no longer pass rules lasting longer than 30 days without the approval or denial by county commissions. However, existing regulations will remain in place, with the new law affecting any amendments to these rules.
- "Tobacco 21" legislation has been enacted in 42 states, but fewer than 10 of these are considered effective bills with a "grade A" rating. Many of these bills impose penalties on youth rather than store owners. The enforcement of age restrictions is no longer a local matter, as federal law now prohibits the sale of tobacco products to anyone under 21.
- Stemming from a court order, retailers nationwide are required to display advisories stating that they misled consumers about the dangers and addictive nature of their products, and this took effect in July.
- The youth vaping rate in West Virginia is three times higher than the national average, and limited efforts have been made for tobacco prevention. This has created an environment for rates to soar.
- The recent Juul settlement from the attorney general's office amounts to around 8 million dollars, with additional lawsuits from 19 boards of education underway to determine how the funds will be spent. Unfortunately, these funds are typically not allocated for youth prevention.
- The Fayette County Commission has implemented zoning ordinances to regulate the location, density, and number of tobacco/vape shops to deter youth initiation.
- "Catch My Breath" is an evidence-based vaping prevention program present in West Virginia and expanding nationwide. The "Raze" program is also gaining momentum, aiming to reduce youth addiction.
- The "Baby and Me Tobacco-Free" program incentivizes pregnant women with tobacco addiction to quit by providing \$25 per month for wipes and diapers if they remain tobacco-free. Pregnant and parenting women can enroll in this program.
- A federal-level menthol ban is being pursued, as most youth start using menthol or other flavored tobacco products. Additionally, this strategy aims to address the targeting of African Americans by such products. You can support this initiative through an organization led by Juliana, who will provide a link for signing up.

- "Tobacco Free WV" holds monthly meetings on the first Wednesday at 9 am and invites subcommittee members to participate. They also maintain a presence on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to provide updates on advocacy efforts. Juliana will send this information in a follow-up message.
- To become a coalition member, you can follow this link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdMGI_ioY7c-Skwva7t5-SezEW3du2kqFj16VKuLIRhLbjhv/w/viewform
- Christina will also forward sample letters for zoning ordinances to interested parties.

Town Hall Meetings and Looking Ahead to 2024

- Tammy encouraged subcommittee members to examine the THM summary and provide their top three priority areas for next year's planning. Tahnee will contact Amy and Deb to establish a deadline for the team and arrange a separate meeting to work through this agenda item.

Next Steps:

- Members will receive the monthly Coalition for Tobacco-Free WV meetings' link, as well as details about social media presence.
- Tahnee will coordinate with Amy Saunders and Deb Koester for scheduling a 2024 plan meeting aimed at advancing the initiatives of the Prevention Subcommittee.

Adjournment:

Without further discussion, Tahnee closed the meeting by thanking all subcommittee members for their attendance and participation. The subcommittee will meet again in November.