Despite the fact that the consequences of tobacco use are well-known to West Virginians, residents continue to use tobacco in alarming numbers. Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of premature death and disease.

West Virginia is aggressively addressing this problem by implementing evidence-based comprehensive tobacco control programs through the Bureau for Public Health’s Division of Tobacco Prevention. Annual federal and state funding for these efforts totaled just over $7 million dollars in SFY2013 (similar funding levels the past seven+ years), which is 25% of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation of $28 million annually.

The comprehensive plan focuses on the following main goals:

- Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies.
- Protect people from secondhand tobacco smoke.
- Offer help to quit tobacco use.
- Warn about the dangers of tobacco use.
- Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.
- Raise taxes on all tobacco products.

The following programs serve as the framework for our tobacco prevention efforts:

**Cessation Programs:** Guidelines stress that system changes are critical to the broad-based success of cessation interventions. Programs that successfully assist youth and adult smokers in quitting can produce quicker and larger short-term public health benefits than any other component of a comprehensive tobacco control program. Statewide tobacco cessation quit line efforts remain very successful in getting residents to quit, and have proven return on investment not only saving individual lives but also millions of dollars in future health costs.

**Clean Indoor Air Programs:** The health of nonsmokers is protected by the enforcement of public and private policies that reduce or eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke. Enforcement of work-site smoking bans protects nonsmokers and decreases the number of cigarettes employees smoke during the workday. Funding local programs produces measurable progress toward statewide tobacco control objectives. Local programs and a statewide regional network of 10 dedicated regional coordinators remains instrumental in the adoption of an increasing number of local ordinances or other provisions restricting smoking in public places, and in maintaining a locally-focused education and prevention effort.

**Youth Programs:** Programs that prevent the onset of smoking during the school years are a vital part of comprehensive tobacco prevention, because most people who begin smoking start before 18 years of age. Youth programs that empower youth and that teach skills to resist these influences can greatly reduce or delay adolescent tobacco use. The youth empowered, award winning, teen-lead Raze movement remains a key to the declining youth tobacco use prevalence in WV. Outreach, community engagement, and education of youth must begin in early years and continued through adolescent and early adulthood. There are significantly fewer teens smoking and never initiating, saving the state billions of dollars in future health costs.