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NC Health & Wellness Trust Fund

2009 Evaluation of the North Carolina TRU Media Campaign

Executive Summary

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Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (TPEP)
for the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund*

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Tobacco Prevention
Evaluation Program
Supporting Community Change Through Evaluation

Executive Summary

North Carolina's Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation (TTUPC) Initiative, funded by the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF), has included a statewide media campaign called *Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered.*, or TRU, since 2004. The campaign utilizes a theme of the serious health consequences of tobacco use affecting real people in North Carolina (NC) and is evaluated using telephone surveys with NC youth. After a baseline survey in early 2004, follow-up surveys with a cohort of youth to examine the impact of the campaign took place later in 2004, 2006, and in 2007. These evaluations showed favorable youth reaction to and increasing youth awareness of the campaign. In the fall of 2006, the HWTF increased the TRU Media campaign budget by about \$3 million, to an annual budget of \$4.5 million.

In July 2008 HWTF launched a new series of five TRU ads featuring Reena Roberts, a 29 year old mother from Asheville. Through the five ads, Reena shares her story of beginning to smoke at age 13, developing cancer at 19, and undergoing a tracheotomy at 21. The 2009 TRU media evaluation survey began six months after the Reena ads first aired using a new cross sectional sample of NC youth. Evaluation results reported here provide outcome data for the 2008 TRU media campaign and show changes in key outcomes over the first five years of the TRU media campaign.

The 2009 TRU media evaluation shows that the TRU media campaign, as currently constructed and executed, remains an integral and successful component of North Carolina's teen tobacco prevention initiative. The TRU campaign has reached record levels of campaign awareness, appears well received by youth, and is preferentially reaching those North Carolina youth at highest risk for future tobacco use. The campaign, combined with state, school and community policies (i.e., increased state excise tax, tobacco-free schools legislation, and community coalition activities), is playing a substantial role in the historically low levels of tobacco use seen among North Carolina middle and high school youth in recent surveys. Continuation and/or selective expansion of the current campaign, with ads aired on a consistent basis, should help ensure that these gains are maintained.

Major findings from the 2009 TRU media evaluation include:

- Youth awareness of the TRU campaign ads, brands, and slogans has significantly increased over the first five years of the campaign.
 - Between 2004 and 2009, youth awareness of TRU ads significantly increased from 48% to 77%, and over 600,000 youth (11 to 17) in NC have seen and are aware of the NC TRU campaign.
 - Youth awareness of the *Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered.* slogan significantly increased from 31% in 2004 to 52% in 2009.
 - Youth awareness of the TRU brand surpassed awareness of the national truth[®] campaign brand, reaching 62% in 2009.
- NC youth responded positively to the series of TRU ads aired in 2008.
 - More than 94% of NC youth who had seen the 2008 "Reena" ads or older TRU ads reported they were convincing, attention-grabbing, and gave good reasons not to smoke.
 - Over 30% of NC youth who had seen the TRU ads reported that they talked to their friends about the ads, indicating high "chat value."

- The TRU ads and slogans are reaching youth who are at higher risk for tobacco use.
 - Youth who engage in sensation seeking behaviors are significantly more likely to be aware of ads from the TRU media campaign and to recognize the *Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered.* slogan.
 - Youth who engage in sensation seeking behaviors and youth who believe that youth smoking is more socially acceptable are more likely to be susceptible to smoking.
- Youth participation in school and community-based anti-tobacco activities has significantly increased since 2004.
 - Almost a third (31%) of youth reported participating in school-based anti-tobacco events in the 2009 survey (24% increase from 2004).
 - Significantly more youth reported the presence of an anti-tobacco group in their community outside of school in 2009 than in 2004.

Other findings from the 2009 TRU media evaluation include:

- Anti-tobacco and pro-health attitudes among NC youth have strengthened since 2004.
 - Significantly fewer youth report that smoking makes people their age look cool or fit in, from 9.5% in 2004 to 5% in 2009, or that smoking is a way to show others you are not afraid to take risks, from 12% in 2004 to 8% in 2009.
- Significantly fewer NC youth appear susceptible to smoking in 2009 compared to 2004.
- Over 90% of youth report support for smoke-free policies in indoor areas they frequent and over 70% support smoke-free policies in outdoor areas they frequent.
- Youth reports indicate that exposure to secondhand smoke in the home environment is decreasing, with significantly fewer youth reporting that there are no rules about smoking in their home and significantly more youth reporting that smoking is not allowed in their home.

The 2009 TRU media evaluation recommendations include:

- Funding
 - Continue funding the TRU media campaign in 2009-2010, at levels similar to or increased from the 2008-2009 campaign, to maintain campaign effects.
- Campaign
 - Develop and air new ads, continuing to focus TRU campaign messages around the serious health consequences of tobacco use affecting real people in North Carolina.
 - Strive for campaign awareness rates of over 80%.
 - Increase ad “chat value” to 35%.
 - Continue airing ads on a consistent basis.
 - Continue to target ads to at-risk youth (i.e., youth who are high sensation seeking and susceptible to smoking).
- Integration
 - Continue integrating the TRU campaign with community and school programs.
- Evaluation
 - Continue annual evaluation of the TRU media campaign to support and provide direction for campaign growth.