

Evaluation of the Alternative to Suspension Program in North Carolina

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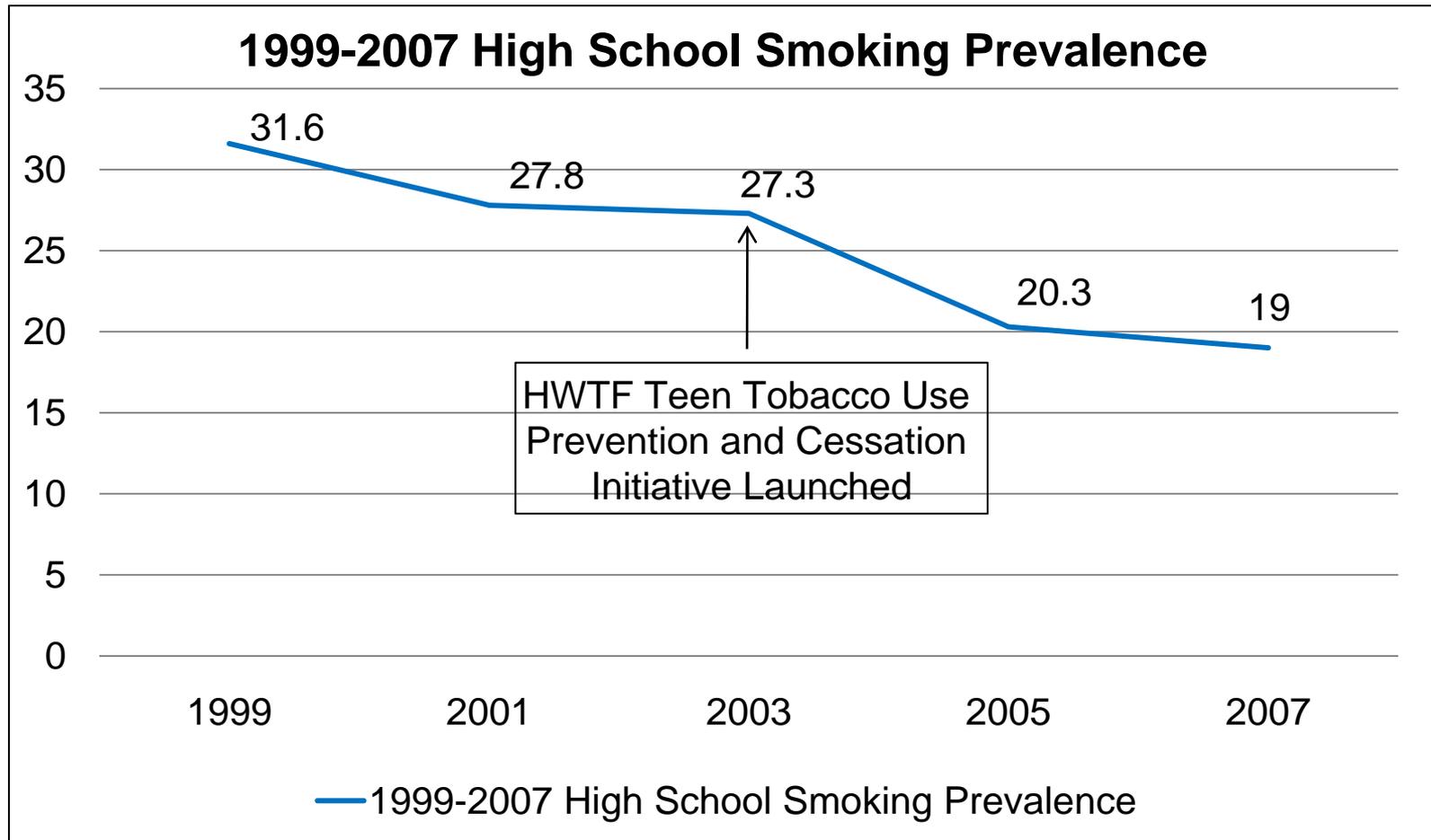
Presentation Outline

- Background
 - Teenage Smoking Rates in North Carolina
 - Overview of American Lung Association's Alternative to Suspension (ATS) Program
- Study Purpose
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusion & Recommendations
- Questions & Comments

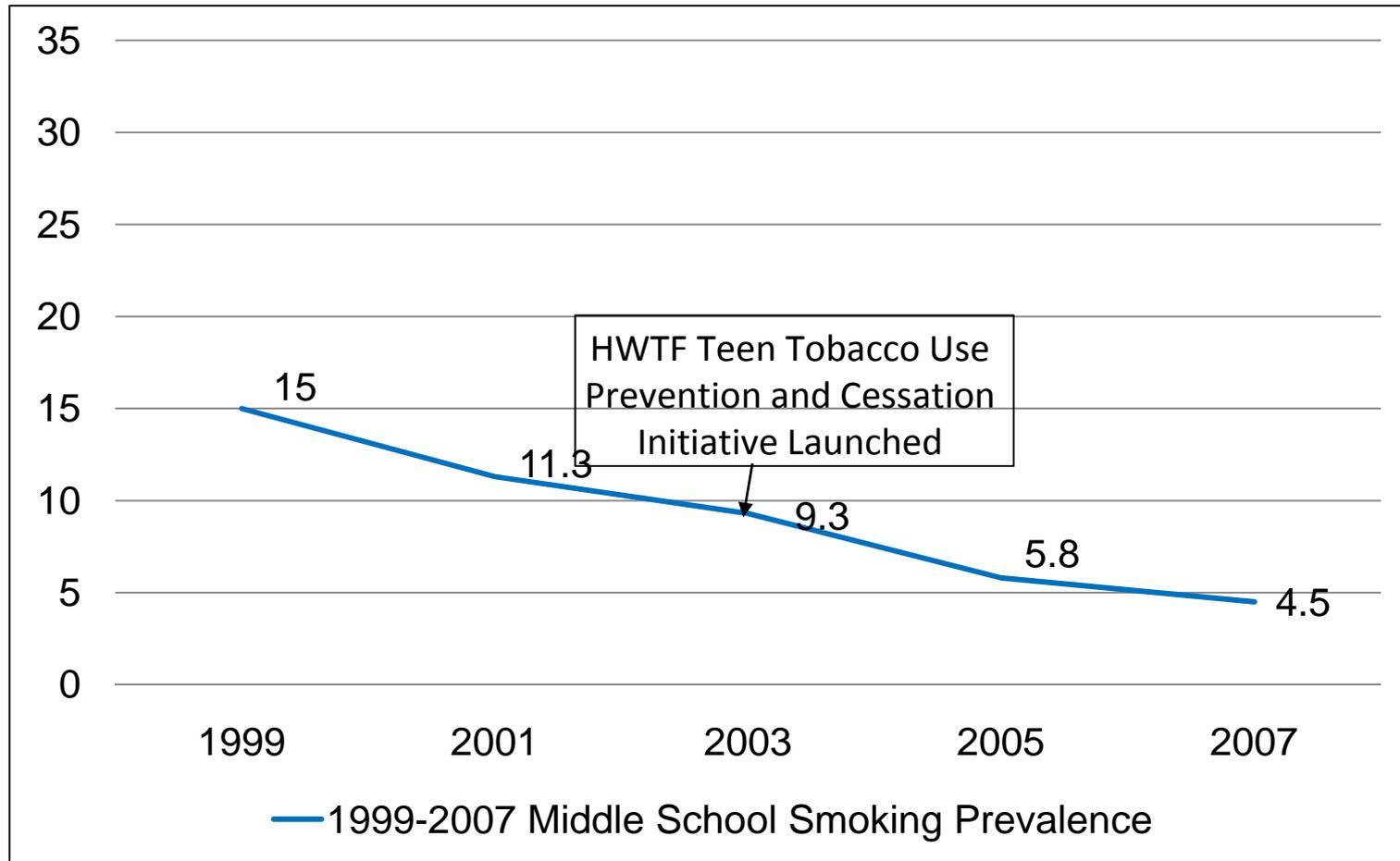
Background

- ❑ Master Settlement funds used to establish Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF)
- ❑ 2003 HWTF launches Teen Initiative state-wide
- ❑ Currently funds 46 grantees to reduce and prevent tobacco use among youth and young adults in NC
- ❑ Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (TPEP) evaluate the HWTF Tobacco Initiatives

Declines in cigarette use among NC High School youth before and after HWTF funding



Declines in cigarette use among NC Middle School youth before and after HWTF funding



Tobacco Free Schools

- ❑ 2007 legislation requires all NC school districts to adopt comprehensive Tobacco Free School (TFS) policies by 2008

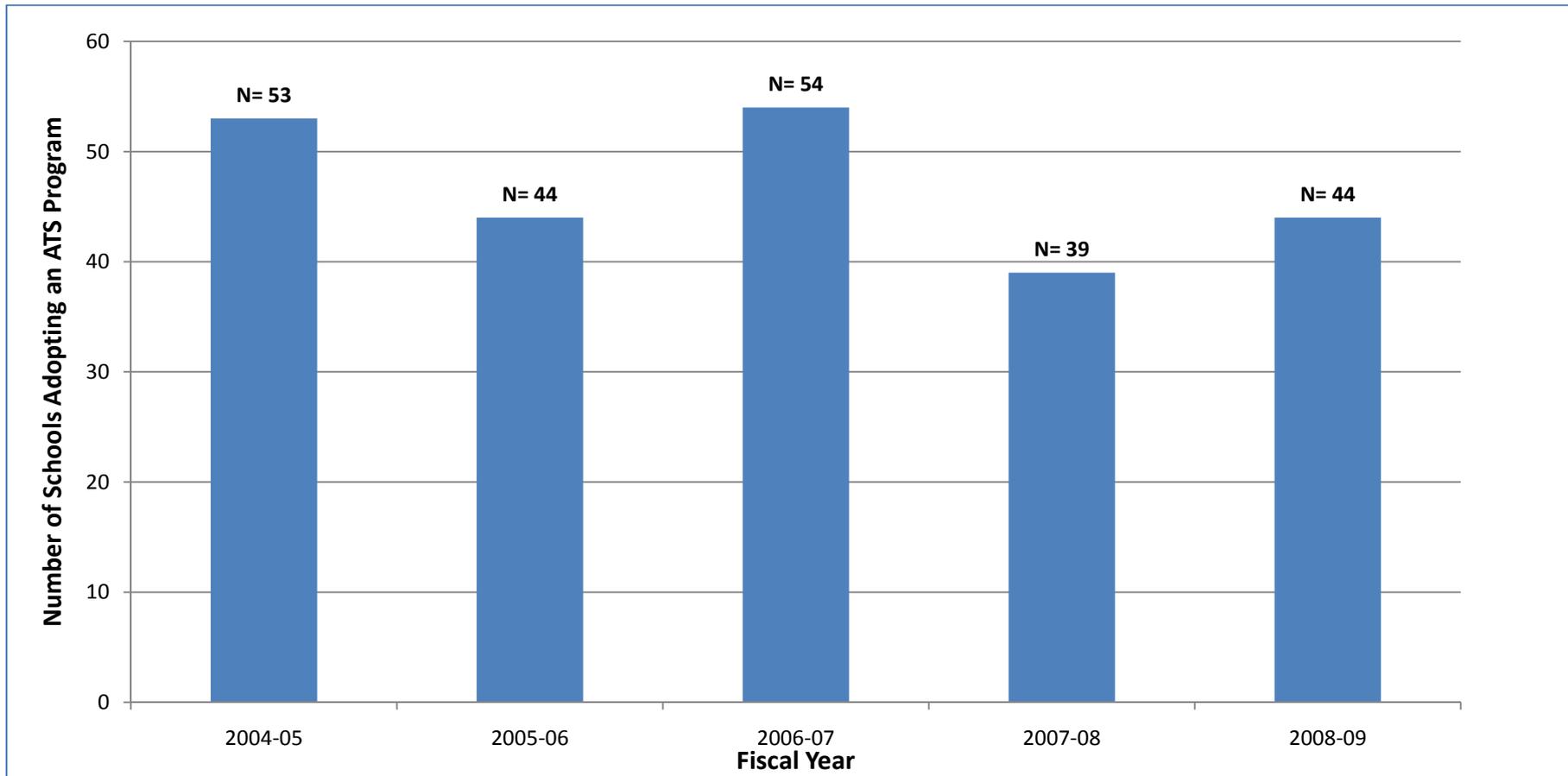
- ❑ Law prohibits use or possession of tobacco product by any person in or on:
 - School buildings;
 - Facilities;
 - School campuses; and
 - Any other school property owned or operated by the local school administrative unit

- ❑ Law requires school personnel to enforce policy

American Lung Association's Alternative to Suspension (ATS) Program

- State-funded program through HWTF
- Offered to middle and high school students caught violating the tobacco-free schools (TFS) policy
- Mandatory Attendance
- Four 50-minute sessions
 - Address student tobacco use, effects of tobacco use, addiction, healthy alternatives to smoking, and making the change to non-smoker
- Unknown how many schools have adopted ATS, how it is perceived, and utilized

ATS Program Adoptions by Quarter, FYS 2004-09



Study Purpose

This study assessed the awareness, adoption, and implementation of the American Lung Association's ATS program by North Carolina schools.

The goal was to better understand the extent to which the American Lung Association's ATS program has been successfully diffused into North Carolina Schools.

Methods

☐ Participants

- 115 Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators (SDFSC) one representing each NC school district
 - Selected SDFSC based on their role in maintaining safe and drug free environments on school campuses
 - SDFSC should have knowledge about TFS compliance and ATS programs

☐ Survey Instrument

- On-line survey (Zoomerang)
- 14 multiple choice and 2 open-ended questions
- Questions assessed the following:
 - ATS Awareness
 - ATS Utilization
 - ATS Implementation
 - Awareness of other programs for TFS policy violations

Data Analysis

- Descriptive Statistics
 - Frequency tables

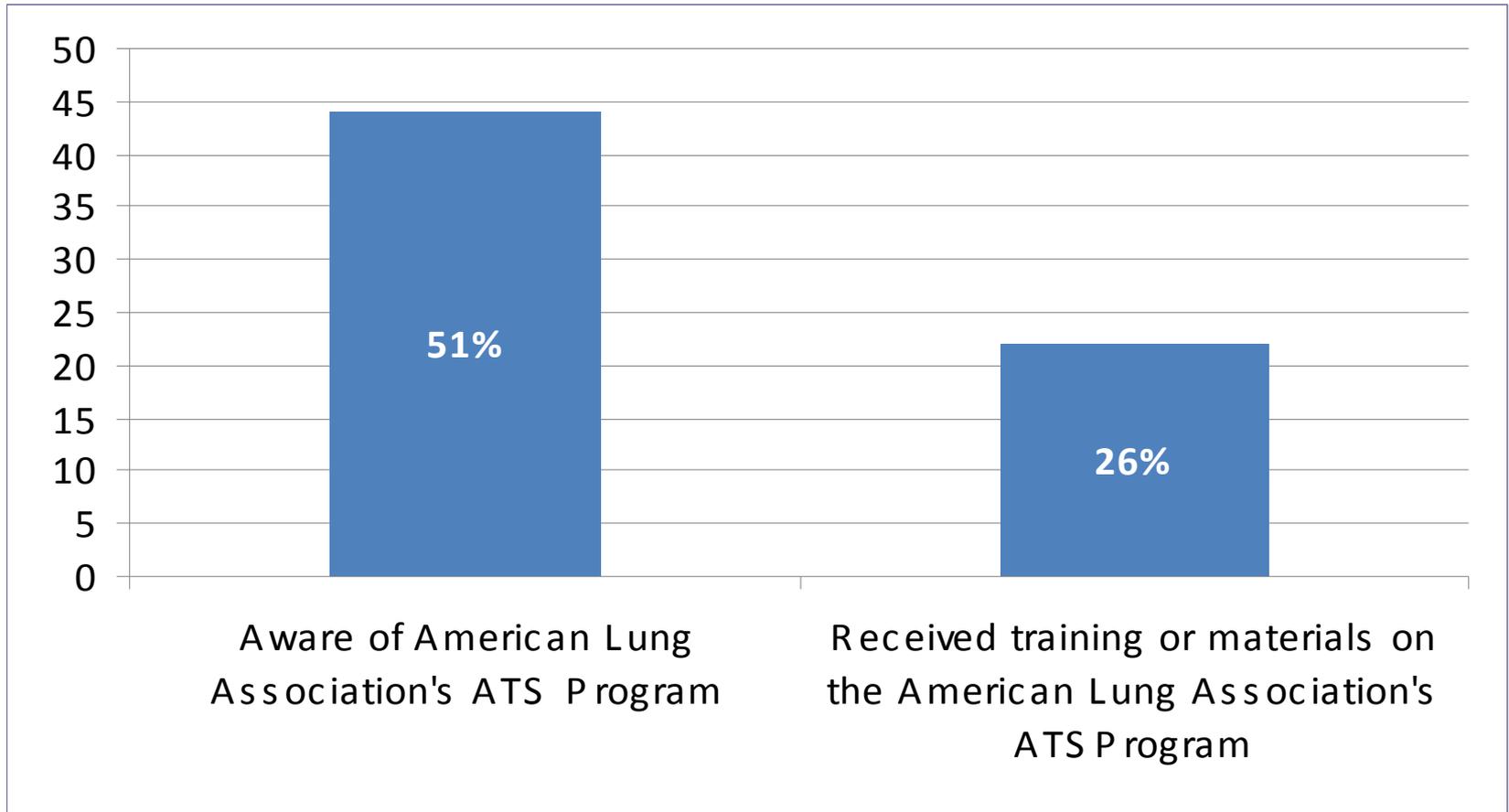
- Qualitative Analysis
 - Thematic review of open-ended responses

Results

- ❑ 86% response rate
 - 15 email addresses were invalid
 - 100 email addresses were valid
 - 86 SDFSC completed the survey

- ❑ Anonymous Survey
 - Demographic information not collected

SDFSC Awareness/Trainings of American Lung Association's ATS Program (N=86)



ATS Program Offered During 2008- 2009 School Year

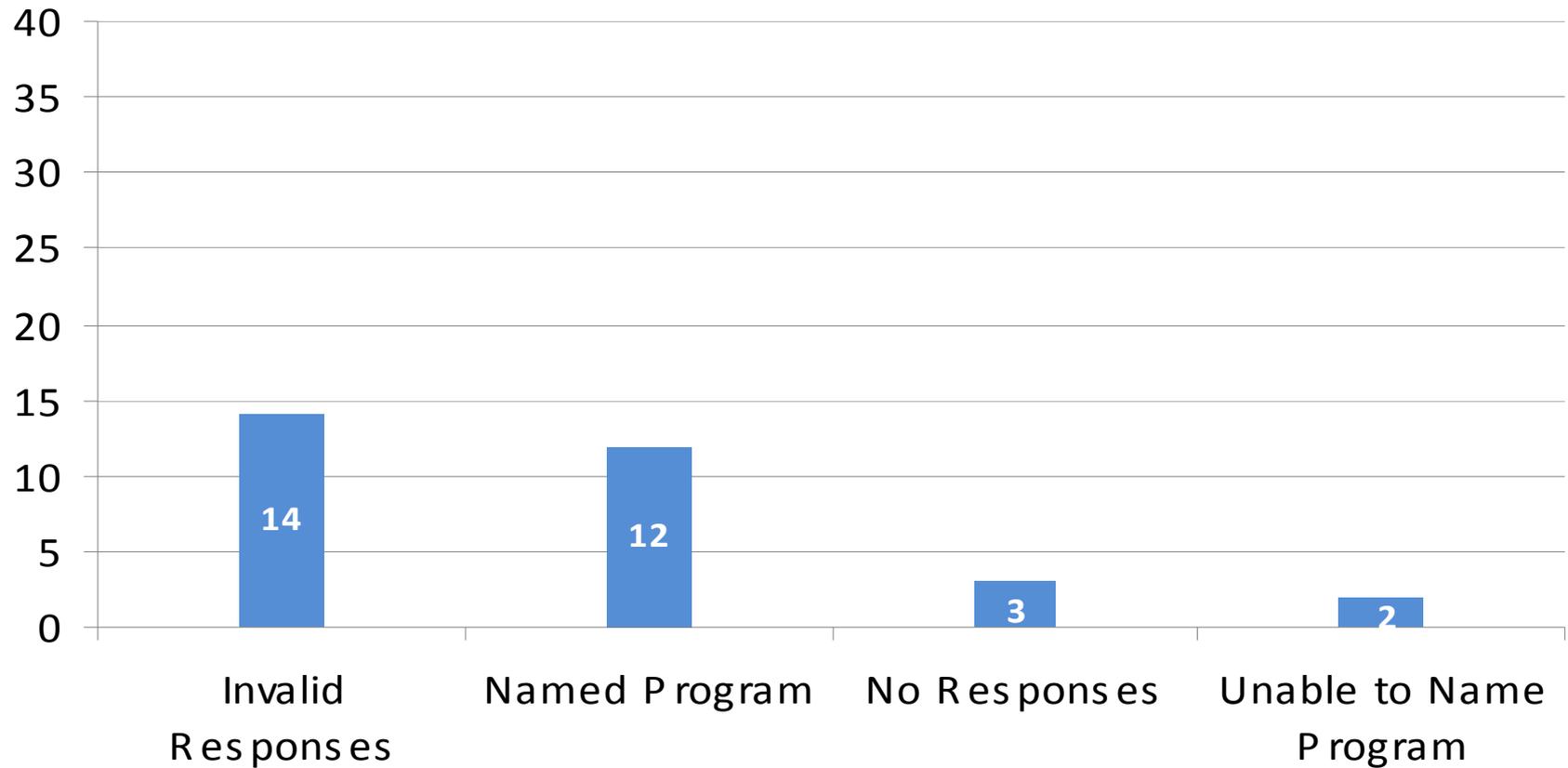
- ❑ 20% of SDFSC reported a school in their district offered ATS.
 - Of the SDFSC who reported receiving the ATS training or materials (n=22), only half (n=11) had knowledge of a school within their school district that offered ATS.

- ❑ 80% SDFSC responded “No” or “Don’t Know” to whether any school in their district offered the ATS program.
 - Of these respondents 38% reported knowing about another program other than ATS offered to students caught using or possessing tobacco products on school grounds.

Reported Tobacco Related Alternative to Suspension Programs by Safe & Drug Free School Coordinators

Response Types	Frequency
Valid Responses (i.e. ASPIRE, GOALS Program, Positive Options Program , etc.)	14
Invalid Responses (i.e. Unknown tobacco efforts, no answer provided, In/Out School Suspension, after school detention, etc.)	17
TOTAL	31

NC School Districts Offering Other Alternative to Suspension Programs During 2008-2009 School Year



ATS Program Tracking (n=17)

- 94% report their school districts track schools offering the program.
- 82% track the number of students referred to the program.
- 25% track demographic information for students referred for violating TFS policy.

ATS Program Benefits (n=17)

- 76% believe to a large or moderate extent that the program was beneficial to students completing at least one 50-minute session.

ATS Program Placement (n=17)

- ❑ 59% believed students caught using/ possessing tobacco products on school grounds were not placed or only sometimes placed in the ATS program rather than suspended.

Qualitative Findings

☐ ATS Program Implementation Barrier Themes

- Lack of Available Staff Personnel

“Need an ATS coordinator for larger school districts.”

“The ATS program seems worthwhile, but finding facilitators, not engaged in other job functions, is problematic.”

- Time constrains to complete ATS sessions

“I think that it should be segmented to fit better into the school day. There is little time to complete the classes during the school day and if it was broken up into segments, then it would be more accepted in the schools.”

Conclusions

- ❑ American Lung Association's ATS program appears to be largest statewide program in North Carolina for alternative to suspension for youth caught using tobacco products.
- ❑ Despite being largest program, reported awareness and training of SDFSC is low statewide.
- ❑ Standards do not appear to exist for tracking number of youth attending program and demographics for those attending.
- ❑ Multiple barriers appear to exist towards standardization of an ATS program in school districts (funding, training, logistical, evaluation).

Conclusions (Continued)

- ❑ More research is necessary to assess the ongoing needs and outcomes for programs such as ALA ATS.
 - Do the programs work?
 - Do students benefit from programs?
- ❑ If a need is identified then strategies to develop administration buy-in, and address barriers related to time constraints and personnel are needed.
- ❑ Additional efforts are needed to increase the number and uniformity of schools across North Carolina offering an alternative to suspension program for youth caught violating TFS policies.

Limitations

- ❑ Assumptions that SDFSC know about ATS and other programs
 - They may not know about what is happening in all schools

- ❑ Less information collected about other programs
 - There may be other programs that we do not know about

- ❑ No information available about impact of ATS on program outcomes
 - We do not know effectiveness of ATS program

Internal & External Threats to the American Lung Association's ATS Program

- Lack of awareness among SDFSC about the ATS program
- Limited ATS program training among SDFSC & other school personnel
- Elimination of SDFSC positions
- Funding from HWTF?

Recommendations

1. Create a standard statewide policy outlining discipline procedures for students caught using or possessing tobacco products on school grounds.
2. Secure funding to support a partial or full time position to administer ATS program within each school district.
3. Educate and disseminate information to SDFSC and other school administrators on American Lung Association's ATS program.

Thank You!

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.tpep.unc.edu/index.htm>

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