

Tobacco Prevention Evaluation Program
UNC-CH Dept. of Family Medicine

**Recommendations for 2005
100% Tobacco Free Schools Media
Campaign in North Carolina**

A report prepared for the
North Carolina Health and Wellness
Trust Fund Commission

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I. Executive Summary and Recommendations

Overview

This report presents the results of a special study conducted on behalf of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) of North Carolina by the University of North Carolina Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (UNC-TPEP). The purpose of the study was to gather information that would assist the HWTF in launching the first statewide television campaign to promote 100% Tobacco Free School (TFS) policies in the country. Specifically, UNC TPEP set out to look at past literature on media and 100% TFS policies, develop a conceptual model for the campaign, and discuss the proposed campaign with TFS experts and community stakeholders. The major intended use of this report is to assist the HWTF and its contracted media vendor in better understanding the issues surrounding the adoption and enforcement of TFS policy in NC, and to provide recommendations for use in the development of an effective and politically feasible 2005 media campaign to promote TFS policy.

The planning and conducting of this study took place in February and March of 2005, and included a literature review, development of a conceptual model, and interviews with experts and stakeholders. In total, 45 interviews were conducted with 16 experts and 29 stakeholders, including 9 legislators. Experts and stakeholders were surveyed as to critical factors behind the adoption or non-adoption of TFS policy, as well as themes that they believed would be effective for the media campaign. Legislators were also asked about which messages they believed would work for the media campaign, as well as which messages the campaign should seek to avoid.

Based on the information in the literature review, conceptual model, and interviews, UNC-TPEP compiled the summary views and recommendations* presented in this report. This report was subsequently reviewed and refined by four broad-based experts in media and tobacco control.

* Some recommendations are presented using the conceptual model for best practices in youth tobacco prevention media campaigns, developed in the December 2003 UNC-TPEP report: *Recommendations for 2004 North Carolina Youth Tobacco Use Prevention Media Campaign*.¹ Only two of the five elements from the model are used: Ad Content/Themes and People in Ad. In the case of this study, Format of Ad is subsumed under Ad Content/Themes. The remaining elements – Emotional Tone and Style – were not included, as they are best tested by obtaining actual viewer response to ads (such as in a focus group setting), rather than through hypothetical interview questions.

100% TFS Media Campaign Recommendations

Ad Content/Theme

(1) Four themes are recommended: (i) adult role modeling, (ii) personal stories about and from affected youth, (iii) experiences of successful TFS districts, and (iv) TFS becoming the norm in NC. These themes all reinforce the promotion, adoption, and enforcement of TFS policy. Because the themes will appeal to different audiences, the campaign can either develop different ads based on the themes, or combine them within a single ad.

People in Ads

(2) To increase the chances that viewers will relate to the people in the ads, and to share a broader perspective on the importance of TFS policy adoption/enforcement, ads should utilize both youth and adults and show a diversity of people. Diversity here refers not simply to gender and ethnicity, but also to roles in TFS policy promotion, such as youth, school administrators, teachers, parents, etc. Primary people in ads should be individuals who have a personal connection to the issue of TFS and to the specific content of the ad (i.e. the theme should be chosen first, and then an appropriate spokesperson for that theme).

Prioritization of TFS Policy as an Issue

(3) As shown in the conceptual model, successful media advocacy must have a substantial impact putting TFS policy on people's agenda (raise awareness), frame the issue, advance policy adoption, and encourage institutionalization (enforcement). The simple fact that not all NC school districts have a 100% TFS policy is important to raise awareness and frame the issue, including a succinct statement about the need for and a definition of 100% TFS policy. To advance policy adoption, the ads must make people feel that adoption/enforcement of TFS policy is of some urgency, provoke a positive reaction in viewers, and motivate them to act. (Some of the options for viewer action are discussed under the "Link . . ." recommendation.)

(4) A necessary component for ads purporting to get TFS policy on people's agendas, frame the issue, and advance the policy will be that the ads are memorable. A recognizable, action-based slogan or tag line should assist viewers in recalling the ad, its message, and particularly its call to action.

Link to Community Programs and Website

(5) Because of the evidence for the effectiveness of comprehensive (including well-funded community programs and media campaigns, among other components) programs in reducing youth smoking, the TFS media campaign should link with the community-

level work that HWTF grantees are doing to promote the adoption or enforcement of TFS policy in their local school districts. As shown in the conceptual model, both community action and media advocacy are necessary to move TFS policy along the stages of policy adoption and enforcement. HWTF grantees should be aware of the media campaign and work to support it, just as the media vendor should ensure inclusion of grantees in promotional events and generation of ideas for future ads.

(6) To increase ad reach in a community, ads should direct viewers to a website to learn more about policy in their own school districts and take action to promote adoption or enforcement of the policy. The website should be interactive and feature tools users can employ to write letters or take other actions directly from the website, as well as a telephone number for a local TFS advocate for people to contact if they want to get involved in promoting TFS policy in their school districts.

(7) Because framing of the issue (and consequent dispelling of myths or fears surrounding the policy) is so important, HWTF grantees should work in collaboration with the media vendor to generate additional earned media in newspapers, the radio, and television. The themes of the TFS media campaign should be emphasized in generating earned media.

(8) Technical assistance providers to HWTF grantees must play an integral role in supporting the link between grantees and the media vendor to create a cohesive campaign promoting TFS policy adoption and enforcement.

Links to Statewide Programs

(9) Continuous and public state-level support for adoption and enforcement of TFS policies should occur in conjunction with the campaign. Letters of support from the Governor, Lt. Governor, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction could be sent to school districts around the state informing them of the campaign, encouraging them to adopt 100% TFS policy if they have not done so already, and encouraging enforcement of the policy for those that have adopted it. The themes of the TFS media campaign can also be stressed in any correspondence. Regional and statewide trainings for HWTF grantees should incorporate campaign messages, themes, and goals.

Testing of Ads

(10) Because North Carolina is the first state to develop a statewide media campaign to promote TFS, and there is little prior research to indicate best practices for this type of campaign, all ads should be tested in diverse focus groups based on the intended audience for the ad. Groups should be tested in districts with and without policies - with parents, school personnel, and school administrators/Board of Education members. (It will be particularly important to test messages with parents since they are underrepresented in the interview sample.)

(11) In order to increase North Carolinians' recognition of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund, the TFS media campaign ads should be clearly identified as being sponsored by the HWTF, and this component should be tested in focus groups.

Evaluation of Campaign

(12) Since the TFS media campaign will be the first of its kind, it will be particularly important to evaluate the campaign to provide further recommendations for similar campaigns in NC and in other states. Evaluation of the campaign may include:

- Random assignment of communities or media markets to various levels of campaign exposure
- Pre and post-campaign telephone surveys of potential adult viewers, statewide or in selected counties
- Process outcomes such as measurement of hits to website promoted in campaign
- Measurement of advocacy actions taken through website promoted in campaign (including phone calls to local advocates, etc.)
- Surveys of new school districts adopting TFS policy to assess influence of media campaign

II. Introduction

The youth tobacco prevention “Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered.” (“TRU”) media campaign has been running in North Carolina since the spring of 2004. In 2005, the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) began plans to expand this campaign to target another important piece of its Teen Tobacco Prevention Initiative: the adoption and enforcement of 100% Tobacco Free School (TFS) policy in NC. *A 100% Tobacco-Free school has a policy that prohibits the use of tobacco products by anyone, including students, staff, and visitors, on school grounds or at school events at all times. This tobacco-free zone includes school premises, school vehicles, and school events, both indoors and outdoors, and both on and off school property.*^{2*} Unlike the 2004-05 TRU ads, the TFS media campaign would be directed at adults – the policy makers, opinion leaders, and parents in a position to influence local school districts’ policies.

Although other states are also working toward TFS policy, no other state has ever launched a large-scale media campaign specific to this effort, making North Carolina the first to air a statewide television campaign to promote TFS policy. Because of the campaign’s innovative subject, the HWTF enlisted the University of North Carolina Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (UNC TPEP) to do some research in preparation for the campaign. Specifically, UNC TPEP set out to:

- (1) Elicit critical factors that *TFS experts* believe may be important in TFS policy adoption and enforcement.
- (2) Seek to understand *community stakeholders’* perspectives and experience with TFS, and elicit the factors that they believe are important facilitators or obstacles in the adoption of TFS policies in North Carolina.
- (3) Outline which themes/messages (determined to be important to TFS policy adoption and enforcement in NC) experts, community stakeholders, and legislators believe would be most effective, safe, and politically feasible for a statewide media campaign.

* Although there is a difference between “TFS policy” and 100% TFS policy, the two terms are used interchangeably in this report.

III. Methodology

The TFS media campaign project took place in six stages. First, TPEP staff conducted a brief review of the literature on TFS, and on public health and media theory. Second, they developed a conceptual model based on applicable theory. Third, they developed a preliminary list of possible themes for TFS ads using the information obtained in the literature review, and created interview forms for identified groups (see Appendices A, B, and C). Fourth, they interviewed TFS experts, local stakeholders, and NC legislators. Fifth, they compiled all of the data into a report and formulated recommendations. Finally, they consulted TFS and media experts to refine and add to their recommendations.

Sample

Experts and stakeholders were selected as follows:

- (1) A preliminary list of NC experts was compiled, and these experts were interviewed and asked for names of other experts and stakeholders – who were then asked for other names (snowball technique).
- (2) The Tobacco Free Schools Director at the NC Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch (TPCB) was instrumental in providing references for TFS experts outside of NC.
- (3) Because the potential number of stakeholders in this media campaign is quite high, experts were asked what groups of people would be most important to interview. Based on these suggestions, TPEP concentrated its efforts on superintendents, Board of Education members, and school administrators and staff, as these are the groups of people with the most power to influence policy and those adults who are most affected by local policy. Efforts were made to interview stakeholders in both areas with and without TFS policies.

Legislators were identified based on a number of factors including political party, gender, position held in the legislature, and availability for interview.

A total of 45 people were interviewed for the project: 16 TFS experts, 20 NC stakeholders, and 9 NC legislators (see Table).

Table: Demographics of Interviewees for TFS Media Campaign Project

Characteristic	N	%
Sample Size	45	100%
Gender		
Male	25	56
Female	20	44
General Interviewee Category		
Experts	16	36
Stakeholders	20	44
Legislators	9	20
Position		
TFS Researchers (NC)	4	9
TFS Advocates (NC)	7	16
TFS Researchers (outside NC)	1	2
TFS Advocates (outside NC)	4	9
Superintendents	6	13
Board of Education Members	5	11
Principals	2	4
Teachers (smoking)	2	4
Directors of Student Services	2	4
School Nurses	1	2
Department of Public Instruction	1	2
Community/Faith-based leader	1	2
Legislators – Democrat	7	16
Legislators – Republican	2	4
Legislators – Senator	3	7
Legislators – Representative	6	13
Legislators – Hold position in legislature	5	11
TFS Policy*		
Stakeholders from school districts <i>with</i> 100% TFS policy	13	29
Stakeholders from school districts <i>without</i> 100% TFS policy	6	13

* N = 19, as stakeholder from DPI not included here

Note: Although this characteristic is not represented in the table, it is important to note that both people for and against TFS policy were interviewed, and that people’s positions on TFS policy did not necessarily match up with whether their school districts had adopted policies.

Procedure

Questions asked of the **experts and stakeholders** were similar (see Appendices A and B) and included:

- Their experience in TFS policy adoption
- The factors they would identify as the most critical to the adoption of or failure to adopt policy in their school districts
- The issues/themes/messages they believed would be most salient to highlight in the media campaign
- Their comments on the list of ideas for ad themes/messages and actors compiled by TPEP based upon the TFS literature and expert suggestions, including themes that they thought were “likely to work” or “not likely to work” and their selections of the best/worst themes
- Their suggestions for other people to interview

The interview form for the **legislative** interviews (see Appendix C) was shorter and asked:

- What kinds of messages they believed would be most effective
- What kinds of messages might be seen as controversial
- Their comments on three of the most popular themes from the expert/stakeholder list

Two interviewers conducted the 45 interviews. The interviewers obtained verbal consent from participants and took extensive notes during the telephone interviews (including quotations) which they then typed up. Expert interviews lasted from 20 to 30 minutes, while stakeholder interviews were shorter – approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Of the total number of experts contacted, interviews were conducted with 94 percent. The proportion of stakeholders reached was lower at 54 percent. The project was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

Analysis

Answers to each interview question were compiled into separate documents. A TPEP researcher reviewed the data from each question to look for common themes. After themes were identified, she analyzed the data for each question and highlighted identified themes. Themes that were emphasized in multiple interviews were included in the report.

For the questions about ad themes/messages and actors, the researcher compiled interviewee responses into a table, and for each message counted the number of responses for “likely to work”, “not likely to work”, and “not sure”. Of the eight themes tested,

those with 20 or more responses for “likely to work” were categorized as “Themes Recommended by Interviewees” while those with 12 or fewer were categorized as

“Themes Not Recommended by Interviewees.” (There were no themes that had 13-19 responses for “likely to work”.) Once the initial report was compiled, quotations were added from the interview notes to illustrate highlighted points.

IV. Literature Review

Although there are a vast number of potential topics related to tobacco free schools, policies, media campaigns, and media theory, the literature review was narrowly focused to include:

- (1) Past TFS media campaigns
- (2) Public health/Media theory to guide the TFS campaign
- (3) Themes/messages to utilize in promoting TFS policy

III A. Past TFS Media Campaigns

After reviewing the literature and speaking with experts at the CDC and other states, TPEP staff learned that North Carolina will be the first to launch a statewide, television-based media campaign to promote the adoption and enforcement of TFS policy. Smaller, local paid media campaigns have been conducted in North Carolina and other states. Examples from North Carolina and other states are listed below. (This is not a comprehensive list of all states' local campaigns.) Both North Carolina and other states have also used earned media to raise the profile of TFS.

North Carolina

- (1) The 2002 radio and print “Expel Tobacco” campaign in NC. The campaign used a theme of the **serious health consequences** that could happen to youth if tobacco were not banned from schools. This theme was used based on the gathering of stories and ideas from people at the NC Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch and interviews with other adults in NC. A survey of 330 adults in NC found overall awareness of the radio campaign to be 24 percent. Four of the 330 adults said that they had taken action as a result of the campaign. The print materials (five posters and newspaper ads), now produced with the current NC Tobacco Free Schools website, are available free on-line at <http://www.nctobaccofreeschools.com>
- (2) A Question Why, youth-focused radio campaign that used the slogan “Our Schools, Our Rules”, and a Question Why, youth-focused TV-based campaign in eastern North Carolina that portrayed an image of “cool kids being okay with not smoking”. Neither of these themes would be appropriate for an adult-focused campaign.

Other states

- (1) Oklahoma created an ad featuring a picture of a youth and listing reasons why schools should go tobacco-free, as well as schools that had already adopted policy to create “**positive peer pressure**”. The ad has never aired.
- (2) Maine does statewide newspaper inserts listing “Star Schools” that have adopted the policy (again creating “**positive peer pressure**”).
- (3) Missouri created television ads that were shown on a local station in the northeast part of the state. The ads featured students, and contained two different messages: one about the example adults set by smoking on school grounds while telling students not to (a **role modeling** theme), and the other about the harms of exposure to **secondhand smoke**. The ads included a toll-free number for people to call to request a copy of a policy guide that had been developed about TFS. In a follow-up survey with schools adopting TFS policies, the health advocates found that six percent of school districts credited the television campaign with their decision to adopt current policies.

It is difficult to speculate as to the effectiveness of any of the specific themes utilized by these campaigns, as the limited information available about their evaluations (if any) does not include viewer feedback on ad content. Application of findings from the NC Expel Tobacco campaign is complicated by lack of more specific information about ad copy or whether the ads contained a definite call to action.

III B. Theory to Guide TFS Campaign

Two theories can help to better understand the mechanisms behind school districts’ adoption of policy, and how the media can have an impact on this process.

The first, **Stage Theory**, comes from the Public Health field of Health Behavior and Health Education and is one of the theories of organizational change. This theory has often been used to examine and explain how schools adopt new programs or policies. There are many different versions of Stage Theory that include anywhere from two to seven “stages”. One of the most comprehensive was developed by Beyer and Trice³ and includes seven stages:

- (1) *Sensing of unsatisfied demands on the system.* The school district becomes aware that there is a problem with tobacco use on their campuses.
- (2) *Search for possible responses.* Decision makers think through possible methods of dealing with tobacco use at their schools: ignore it, look at current policy, explore adoption of new policy.

- (3) *Evaluation of alternatives.* Once these alternatives have been identified, school administrators and Board of Education members must examine the potential costs and benefits of each strategy. Local advocates or opponents are critical at this stage.
- (4) *Decision to adopt a course of action.* School administrators and Board of Education members decide to follow a particular course of action – keeping current policy or voting for 100% TFS policy.
- (5) *Initiation of action within the system.* Once 100% TFS policy is adopted, school administrators and personnel must communicate this policy to staff and the community through changes in the school handbook, signage, announcements, and other methods they choose.
- (6) *Implementation of the change.* The policy is officially adopted and is enforced with students, staff, and visitors. Alternatives to Suspension programs are implemented. Initial reactions to the policy occur and are managed.
- (7) *Institutionalization of the change.* Students, staff, and visitors grow accustomed to the policy as it becomes entrenched in the school district. TFS policy is accepted and followed.

A media campaign can play a role at all seven of these stages – through raising awareness of the issue, suggesting 100% TFS policy as an alternative, and creating pressure for adoption and enforcement of the policy.

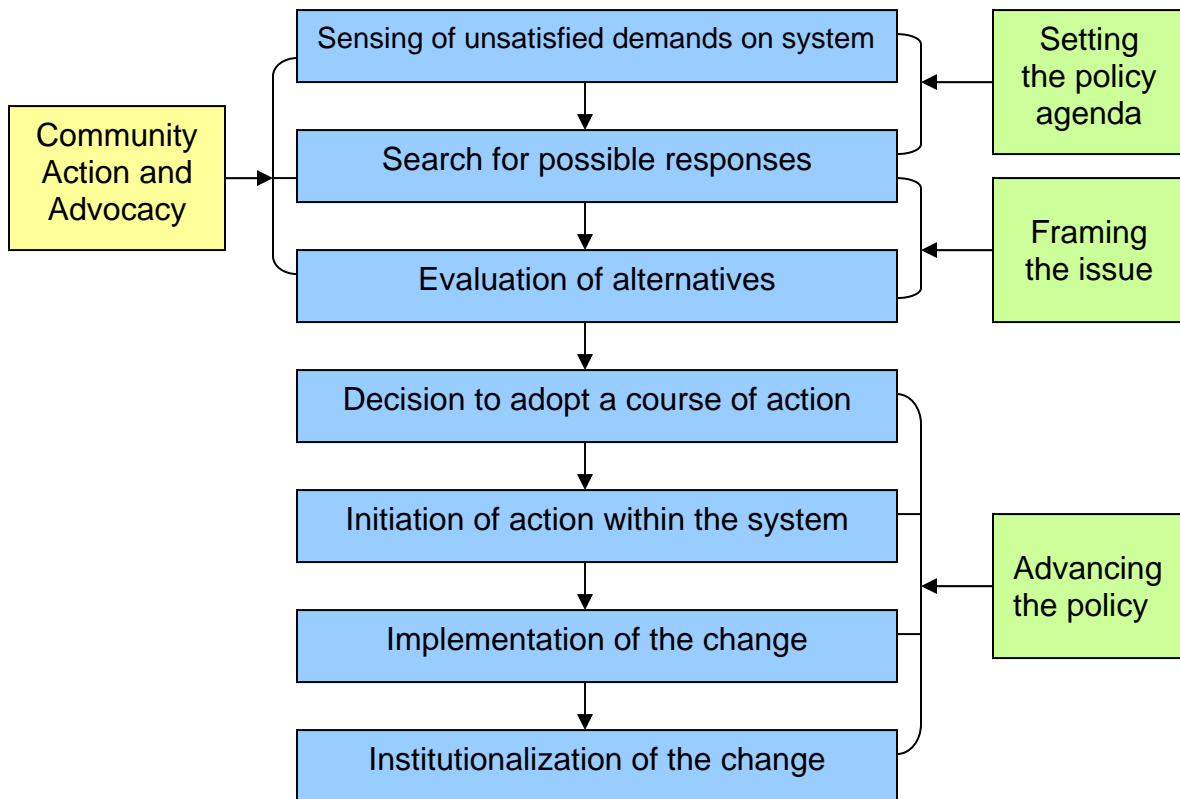
The second, **Media Advocacy Theory**, helps to explain how media campaigns can have an effect on public health. Media advocacy is “the strategic use of mass media for advancing of social or public policy initiative”.⁴ Media advocacy campaigns usually have a narrow target audience, primarily the decision-makers who have the ability to make the health policy changes that the campaign is focusing on. In the case of 100% TFS policy, the primary targets for the campaign would be school administrators such as superintendents and Board of Education members. The secondary targets are people who have the power to press decision makers into action – in this case, principals or teachers, parents, and other key stakeholders in the community. The tertiary targets are members of the general population in order to build a broad base of support for the policy.

Media advocacy campaigns generally utilize both paid and earned media. HWTF grantees have already been using earned media to promote TFS policy in their local school districts, and this paid campaign will complement and boost their efforts. Media advocacy campaigns are important in:

- (1) *Setting the policy agenda.* The TFS campaign will be important in getting 100% TFS policy on the “public agenda”. Many people are still unaware that all schools are not tobacco-free, or do not understand the importance of the policy. The ideal outcome of the TFS media campaign will be to get TFS policy on the immediate agenda of school administrators and Board of Education members (the primary target), as well as getting parents and the general public talking about the issue, and consequently putting pressure on decision makers.
- (2) *Framing the issue.* Although getting TFS policy on people’s agenda is important, it is also critical to shape how they view and discuss the issue. Do they see it as a health issue or one of “smokers’ rights”? This media campaign will be instrumental in defining the way citizens understand the issue of TFS. (This report primarily addresses this piece – how ads should frame the issue of TFS for the media campaign.)
- (3) *Advancing the policy.*⁵ Once people have TFS policy on their agenda and understand the issue, they must know how to advance the policy. Ad messages must push people to action – in this case, encouraging decision-makers to bring the policy to a vote, and directing parents/community members to a website to take further action to encourage their schools to adopt/enforce policy.

The following figure depicts a conceptual model illustrating the interaction of Media Advocacy Theory with Stage Theory for the TFS media campaign.

Figure. Conceptual Model of Impact of Media Campaign on TFS Policy Adoption/Enforcement.



III C. TFS Messages in the Literature

Based on the review of articles related to TFS policy, the following list of factors or messages related to policy adoption or enforcement proves salient. This list of potential messages was subsequently tested with interviewees to determine overall campaign themes that might be safe, effective, and politically feasible for use in a statewide television ad. The overall results from the combined literature review and interviews are reported in Section IVB.

(1) **The Importance of Adult Role Modeling.** A number of studies have emphasized the link between adult smoking behavior and youth attitudes toward smoking. One study of 9,762 students in grades 8-10 in Minnesota found an association between the frequency with which youth observed smoking behavior and their belief in the social acceptability of smoking.⁶ Another study examined factors associated with support for tobacco free schools in California and found that student smokers who observed teachers smoking in school were much less likely to support TFS policy. The authors of this study concluded that it was necessary to increase efforts to educate teachers about the importance of their modeling of compliance with TFS policy for students.⁷ A local television campaign in Missouri used a role modeling theme for one of its ads. In a follow-up survey with schools adopting TFS policies, the health advocates found that six percent of school districts credited the television campaign with their decision to adopt current policies.⁸ In North Carolina, the NC Youth Empowerment Study (NC YES) interviewed key informants from the first 14 school districts to adopt 100% TFS policies in the state, and also found role modeling to be a key message in advocating for policy adoption.⁹

(2) **Experiences of Successful TFS Districts.** This theme was developed through the joint research of TFS experts in NC, Oklahoma, and at the CDC. The researchers found from field experience and key informant interviews that personal testimony from school administrators can be very effective in convincing other administrators to support the adoption/enforcement of TFS policy.¹⁰

(3) **A Personal Story from Youth about the Importance of TFS Policy Related to Health Consequences.** Best practices research from tobacco prevention and cessation campaigns indicates the potential effectiveness of personal testimonials and messages relating to serious health consequences of tobacco use, when used in a way that evokes strong emotional response.^{1, 11} The NC YES study similarly found the personalization of health risks to youth from exposure to secondhand smoke to be compelling in decision makers adopting 100% TFS policy.⁹

(4) **Increases in Youth Cessation/Decreases in Youth Initiation.** A focus group study published in 2004 with smokers, experimenters, and quitters aged 15-17 found that schools' tobacco policies and their enforcement had an effect on youth smoking – making it either more difficult or easier and tempting to smoke.¹² A study of Spanish youth also concluded that schools' enforcement of tobacco policies had a large impact on their

smoking prevalence.¹³ Similarly, a study of 23 schools in California found that schools with more comprehensive tobacco policies had lower rates of smoking among students.¹⁴ A study of smoking adults in Australia examined “socially cued smokers” – those who were “cued” to smoke in places that allowed smoking and where others were smoking. One-fourth of these smokers said they would be likely to quit if smoking were banned in these settings. Socially cued smokers were more likely to be under the age of 30, leading researchers to conclude that tobacco free policies in social venues would have a particularly strong effect in helping young adult smokers who frequent these venues to reduce consumption or quit.¹⁵

V. Interviews

IV. A. Critical Factors to TFS Policy Adoption

Experts were asked to identify factors that were common to three types of school districts: those that had successfully adopted TFS policies, those in which policies has been voted upon but not passed, and those that had not yet brought TFS policies up for a vote. Stakeholders were similarly asked to think about which factors had been critical to the adoption or non-adoption of TFS policies in their school districts.

Successful adoption

Experts and stakeholders listed the following as key to the successful adoption of TFS policy in a school district:

- (1) **Framing of the issue.** The way that the issue of TFS was framed was very important. Messages such as the health and well-being of students or the importance of adult role modeling swayed decision makers, whereas the idea of “rights” or negative messages were likely to put people on the defensive. (The media campaign will be instrumental in framing the issue of TFS for school districts still working toward adoption.)

“Adopting the policy was very difficult, but implementing it has been easy. There were lines drawn between the people who understood that the policy was promoting a healthy culture, role modeling, etc, and those who thought it was an issue of personal choice, freedoms, or decisions. It was necessary to educate people about why this policy was important.”

“It all depends on how the issue is framed: people’s health vs. ‘stop smoking’. You have to get key policy makers to the table to educate them”

- (2) **Local and widespread support.** Many people talked about the importance of people within the school and community advocating for the policy, rather than a handful of health professionals or tobacco prevention advocates. Teachers, school administrators, and Board of Education members are key to the passage and enforcement of policy. Coalitions advocating for the policy should be diverse and include school personnel, youth, and community members.

“You need to create a push from within the school and a pull from outside. You need to recruit allies and have partners within the school. You can’t just have tobacco advocates from outside the school working on this.”

“There is a huge leap between having a policy and having a TFS. Some schools don’t enforce the policy. They need to get buy-in from people. Schools need to initiate adopting the policy. They don’t like being told what to do from outside sources.”

- (3) **Local champions, particularly school administrators and Board of Education members.** Similarly, a dedicated champion is integral to pushing this policy through to a vote, and educating school personnel and Board members about its importance. Many stakeholders emphasized how much easier passage of the policy was when it came from “top down” – backed by a superintendent or Board of Education member.

“The most important question is – where does the superintendent stand on [the policy]? You have to get inside information. It was really helpful to us that we had a School Board member on our task force, as well as Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators. We sent them invitations to be on the task force.”

“You really need support from inside the school system. It’s so much easier when a top-down decision is made.”

- (4) **Youth advocacy.** As mentioned above, youth should be part of the coalition advocating for the policy. Although it is integral that they have adult support to get their voices heard, youth presentations to the Board can be very persuasive in getting policy passed.

“You really have to get the youth in front of the Board to talk. That is very important.”

- (5) **Communication.** Communication with decision makers, school personnel, and the community is not only integral to adoption but particularly to enforcement. People must understand why the policy is important and how it will be enforced.

“We adopted the policy in spring and promoted the policy over the summer through banners and posters, as well as the newspapers and on the local TV cable channel. Our first real ‘test’ was our first football game. It went really well because of the advance notice and positive attention that the policy had gotten. There is a large percentage of the population who are heavy smokers, but they accepted the policy very well, and in fact were pointing out smokers on the visitors’ side.”

“It’s all about communication, communication, communication. Communication with the communities and with parents, teachers, students, everyone, about the new policy. How, when, and where the message is communicated are important. It’s good to start the policy effective with the new school year and use the summer for communicating. You can partner with the school system to change the handbook, website, signs for sporting events, etc, and you can send mailings to parents and put notes in with the teachers’ pay stubs.”

Unsuccessful adoption

Experts and stakeholders listed the following factors influencing school districts that had tried unsuccessfully to adopt a policy, or that had not yet introduced a policy to the Board of Education for a vote.

- (1) **Lack of factors integral to successful adoption.** School districts that lack local champions, youth advocates, and active supporters within the school have a more difficult time getting policy introduced, let alone passed. Without these local people to educate decision makers and encourage communication, the issue may not get on school administrators' agendas, or may be framed in such a way that people do not understand its importance.

“Red flags for me would be a coalition that is not diverse – just a few people, not having a champion on the School Board, not having any parents or smokers involved, or a group that is trying to ‘sneak’ the policy through. You have to educate the community as part of the process; otherwise, even if you get the policy through, it won’t be followed.”

- (2) **Fears, misunderstandings, and myths about policy adoption and enforcement.** Perhaps the largest contributor to non-adoption of policy lies in people's fears about how TFS policy will be implemented, particularly at sporting events. School administrators may fear reductions in revenues or think they will be unable to enforce the policy at games. They may also fear that teachers and staff will quit to work in other counties if a TFS policy is adopted. Both experts and stakeholders in districts that have successfully adopted policies were quick to point out that these fears were based on “misunderstandings or myths” about the policies, as they had seen that these challenges either did not exist or could be overcome.

“The major myths are that the policy cannot be enforced well, that football attendance will decrease, or that school teachers will quit or move to another county.”

“Fear of enforcement, of public relations, of people not coming to games, of people getting mad at the School Board and not voting for the bond issue . . .”

- (3) **Strategic opponents.** Some stakeholders said that a key opponent, often a superintendent, had discouraged work on TFS policy adoption in their school district. “Strategic opponents” are the other side of local champions, once again showing the importance of support from those with decision-making power in a school district.

“The biggest problem is when there are smokers on the School Board who feel threatened by the policy, or feel that tobacco is part of their heritage.”

“I have heard of one place where there was a directive from a superintendent that they were not to push this forward.”

- (4) **Timing.** Some people talked about how important timing had been in the passage or non-passage of their policy. It is essential to allow time to educate Board of Education members about the policy before asking for a vote. Outside factors such as the timing of a vote in a neighboring county can also play a role. Some districts that have not yet introduced the policy for a vote are still doing the necessary preparation work.

“The School Board was approached at the wrong time. They needed a ‘softening up’ period.”

- (5) **Symbolic culture of tobacco in North Carolina.** In some counties with strong tobacco ties, people are particularly worried about “rocking the boat” with TFS policy.

“[The biggest problem is] the misunderstanding that the policy is going to necessarily do something to tobacco farmers, or that the policy threatens adults’ right to freedom of choice.”

“There is a fear because of the tobacco farmers. This area was a major tobacco market. There are tobacco warehouses here, and the two main streets are Market St. and Brightleaf Blvd, so you can see the legacy hovers over everything.”

- (6) **Practical issues.** For many counties that have yet to introduce TFS policy for a vote, support or lack of support for the policy is not the issue. They simply have too many other issues competing for attention, and TFS policy is not seen to be as urgent as issues such as funding cuts, explosive population growth, or low test scores. Additionally, lack of funding for enforcement is seen as a barrier to policy adoption for some schools. Schools do not have the same incentive to deal with tobacco policy as they do with other issues such as students’ test scores, which have tangible rewards and consequences associated with them.

“TFS policy is an unfunded mandate and there is no money for enforcement. The sheriffs won’t help because smoking is not a crime. A large proportion of the population uses tobacco, so there is no way to realistically police them without money for enforcement.”

“Most school administrators listen to the station WIIFM, or ‘What’s In It For Me?’ You have to help them figure out how they can benefit from this policy, as there are so many other competing priorities.”

“Tobacco use is seen as a low priority for many schools; their focus is on testing. The TFS issue has a ‘hassle factor’ and there is no inherent incentive for schools to take it on, as there is for getting their kids to pass the state tests. They need to get some kind of public recognition, like they do for test scores.”

“It’s one of our goals, but the problem is that our student population has over-doubled this year, and we have also doubled the number of kids in our health care plan. A lot of people move to our county with chronically ill children, because of its relative affordability and its proximity to major hospitals . . . and so our main health concern these days is just to deal with this influx of chronically ill children.”

IV. B. Themes for Use in the Ad Campaign

Experts, stakeholders, and legislators were asked which themes, ideas, or messages they believed would be effective for an adult-focused statewide media campaign designed to promote the adoption and enforcement of TFS policy in North Carolina. Expert responses were compiled along with results from the literature into a list, and both experts and stakeholders were asked to comment on each suggested theme. Respondents were asked to choose whether they believed the theme was “likely to work”, “not likely to work”, or say if they were “not sure”. They were then asked if they believed the theme was likely to be controversial, and if there were one or two of the themes that they would identify as the best or worst of the list.

Because of the need to shorten the interview form for legislators, they were only asked to comment on three of the themes (three that had proven most popular with the experts and stakeholders already interviewed). Legislators were also asked which themes or messages the campaign should definitely avoid.

Results follow by theme.

Themes Recommended by Interviewees

(1) A Positive Message about TFS Becoming the Norm in NC.

This message was suggested by a couple of TFS experts with experience working in North Carolina. The idea is to create a positive message about the growing movement in NC and convey the idea that enforced TFS policy is becoming the accepted norm in the state. (“*Thank you for passing and supporting 100% TFS policy.*”) Districts that have not yet adopted the policy or are not enforcing it would feel they were “out of step” with the rest of the state and be moved to take action to change. The ad would promote a website for viewers to get further information on the policy in their areas, and actions they could take to advocate for its adoption or enforcement.

This message was deemed effective by the majority of experts and stakeholders, and was the one chosen as the “best message” most frequently. Supporters of this theme liked its positive message and thought “positive peer pressure” was likely to work in getting TFS policy on school administrators’ agendas. Some respondents, however, did not feel that this message was as strong, and were not sure that it would be convincing given that only 51 of 115 school districts in NC have currently passed the 100% TFS policy.

This message was one of the three tested with legislators, and most did not respond enthusiastically to this idea. Only 1 of 9 really liked this message. The other eight were rather indifferent to the message; none voiced strong opposition. This message’s popularity with experts and stakeholders, but less enthusiastic reception from legislators, may indicate that it is most effective with school administrators or personnel and advocates, but may not resonate as strongly with others.

(2) Experiences of Successful TFS Districts.

An ad with this message would feature adults and youth from school districts that had passed TFS policies talking about their experiences after adoption. Most respondents liked this message because they believed it would “dispel myths” about TFS policy. Many shared that their own school districts had adopted policies after hearing about the success of nearby districts. A TFS expert outside of NC talked about the effectiveness of parents in non-TFS districts visiting schools in TFS districts for sporting events, and then going back to their own schools to advocate for TFS policies. He called this effect “cross-pollination”.

Support for this theme was not unanimous. A few respondents felt that school districts would adopt policies that they felt were best for their own people, regardless of the experience of others. To counter this attitude, another respondent noted that counties featured would have to be ones everyone could relate to; for example, the success of a district in an urban area may not resonate with a small, rural district in tobacco country. This theme was the second most frequently chosen as “best”. Like the “Norms” message above, this theme may be more likely to be compelling to school administrators and personnel, or others involved in TFS policy work.

“This is part of what worked for us. About six months before we adopted our policy, a nearby school district adopted it. Hearing about their success encouraged our School Board to consider it.”

(3) The Importance of Adult Role Modeling.

A message with this theme would talk about how important it is for teachers, staff, and parents to be role models for youth, and to exhibit healthy behavior for youth. As some respondents pointed out, teachers’ behavior should be consistent with the health lessons they are teaching in the classroom for them to be believable.

This message resonated with most respondents. One expert noted that she had found this message to be particularly effective with educators, though not as much with people in other fields, such as health. A few people were concerned that the message might be controversial, because it could put some teachers and parents on the defensive. Most experts and stakeholders agreed, however, that a role model message would resonate with most adults and could be an effective piece of a campaign to promote the adoption and enforcement of TFS policy.

The role modeling message was one of the three suggested to legislators. Legislator response was mixed. Only one of the nine legislators interviewed believed it was the best message of the three. Other responses were fairly indifferent, though two legislators specifically noted that they thought this theme might make smoking parents and teachers defensive.

“You can’t teach them one thing and show them another.”

“The role modeling argument is key: ‘Stop showing our youth that smoking is okay.’”

(4) A Personal Story from Youth about the Importance of TFS Policy Related to Health Consequences.

The idea for this ad was to put a face on the policy by having a youth give his or her own story about why this policy is important. The example used in the interview was a band member with asthma who had trouble playing at football games because of exposure to secondhand smoke.

This idea was also popular with respondents, though not as much so as the first three on this list. Supporters of the theme emphasized that it was important for people to understand why this policy was important, and that hearing from a youth might be the most effective way. A few people expressed concern that people might not hear the message if they did not relate to the teen, or that adults would rather hear from other adults than teens.

In general, though, people liked the idea of a youth appearing in the ad. When asked what kinds of people would be most compelling for an adult-focused, TFS ad, respondents most frequently chose youth. (See “People to Appear in Ads” section.)

This was the third of the themes tested with legislators, and the most popular with them. Four of the nine chose it as the best theme; an additional two thought it was good; and one thought it would be best when combined with the role models message. The other two legislators did not like the theme.

“You have to put a face on the policy – hearing from a youth would be really compelling.”

Themes Not Recommended by Interviewees

The following four themes are ones that were discussed as possibilities with interviewees, but to which a large number of respondents answered “not likely to work” or “not sure”.

(5) Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke. This theme was tested because of its successful use in statewide campaigns promoting smoke-free environments. Most people felt that this was not the most salient or compelling issue to highlight for a TFS campaign, however, as other themes were more directed to or compelling for TFS policy adoption in NC.

(6) **Increases in Youth Cessation/Decreases in Youth Initiation.** Based on literature on how poor enforcement of school policy can encourage students to smoke, and how eliminating smoking in certain environments can promote cessation among socially cued smokers, this theme was suggested as a possible one for the media campaign. Again, respondents found this theme to be dry and not convincing or stirring enough for a media campaign.

(7) **Serious Health Consequences of Tobacco Use.** This theme was also tested because of its successful use in statewide campaigns directed at prevention and cessation. Respondents felt it was not directly relevant to a campaign for TFS and rated it as one of the worst themes. This was partially because respondents interpreted this theme to mean long-term health consequences of tobacco use (such as lung cancer or voice boxes), rather than serious health consequences that could impact students, such as asthma.

(8) **Non-Health Impact of Schools without TFS Policies.** This theme arose from suggestions from TFS experts who had heard stories in the field about non-health impacts on youth at schools without TFS policies. One expert shared with us a letter from a father whose child could not use the bathroom all day at school because there were always students in there smoking. When presented with this theme, many respondents thought it could be effective, but others pointed out that it was not on target with a campaign about both adoption and enforcement. Students are not permitted to smoke in school bathrooms at any school, so this problem concerns enforcement of policy rather than adoption.

IV. C. People to Appear in Ads

Experts and stakeholders were read of list of potential types of people to appear in ads. Although it was often difficult to separate the person from the theme (e.g., a youth must appear in the personal testimonial of youth, and superintendents/school personnel would be best to relate the experiences of successful districts), people were asked to think about which kinds of people would be most compelling in general.

By and large, respondents felt that youth would be the best people to appear in an ad. Some respondents felt strongly that adults should appear as well. School administrators, parents, and teachers were thought to be potentially effective spokespeople, whereas community members (without a strong connection to the issue), politicians, and well-known figures in NC did not go over as well. It is important for any person appearing in a TFS ad to have some personal connection to and experience with the issue.

VI. Limitations

Several limitations to this study exist. First, as NC is the first state to launch a statewide television campaign on 100% TFS policy, there are no other similar campaigns or corresponding research from which to learn. This report is therefore based on formative research, and ad messages will need to be tested in a focus group setting before best practices for a TFS policy campaign can be defined.

Second, the use of the snowball technique for selecting interviewees may have led to a biased, rather than representative statewide sample of NC stakeholders. Similarly, the fact that we were only able to speak to 54 percent of the potential stakeholders on our list may mean some segments of the population were left out of the survey. However, no respondents refused to participate in the interviews, and those that did participate have tremendous diversity of gender, ethnicity, occupation, and roles.

Third, we were unable to speak to any respondents that identified solely as parents. It was difficult to obtain names of parents from other interviewees, and parents that were contacted did not return calls or proved difficult to reach. Since parents are a key part of the target audience for this campaign, it will be important to include them in focus groups to test the developed ads.

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VIII. Appendices

Appendix A: Expert Interview Form

1. Please tell me about your experience with TFS policy adoption. *[For people in other states, ask about TFS work in their state.]*

2. Based on your experience what would you identify as the most critical factors (people, issues, messages, arguments) associated with *successful adoption* of TFS policies?

3. Based on your experience what would you identify as the most critical factors (people, issues, messages, arguments) associated with *unsuccessful adoption* of TFS policies?

4. Based on your experience what would you identify as the most critical factors (people, issues, messages, arguments) associated with communities that simply have not tried to adopt TFS policies?

5. What issues/themes/messages do you believe would be most salient to highlight in an adult-focused statewide media campaign designed to promote the adoption and enforcement of TFS [in NC]? [Note: Only ask “in NC” to those within the state.]

6. I am going to read you a list of ideas for messages that have been suggested to us by the literature or by other experts such as yourself, as well as a list of the kinds of people who might appear in ads. [Explain each one.] Which of these do you believe would work well in an adult-focused media campaign to promote TFS adoption/enforcement [in NC]? Which of these do you think would not work? Which do you think could be potentially controversial in NC? [Note: Only ask “in NC” to those within the state.] If you had to pick the best idea/actor, which would you pick? What about the worst?

	Likely to work	Not likely to work	Not sure	Controversial	Best	Worst
THEMES						
Importance of adult role modeling						
Increasing youth cessation and decreasing initiation						
Health effects of SHS						
Personalization of health risks – youth (ex: SHS effect – asthma)						
Personalization of health risks – serious consequences (inc.long-term)						
Other (non-health) impact on youth (ex: youth can’t use bathroom)						
Experiences of successful TFS districts						
TFS is the norm in NC; schools & parents should be proud of change; kids are healthier						
Other _____						
ACTORS						
School administrators						
Parents						
Community members						
Politicians						
Well-known figures in NC						
Youth						
Teachers/Staff						
Other _____						

7. Are you familiar with any LEAs/ counties/ other states that have used local media to promote TFS? What kinds of messages did they use? Were they successful in adopting TFS policy? If so, did they attribute any of their success to media messages?

8. A. After we speak to experts such as yourself, we would also like to interview some community stakeholders in NC to ask about TFS policies in their areas, and how they believe a successful campaign to promote TFS could be promoted in NC. In your opinion, what kinds of people should we talk to? *[Can give examples if need be – teachers, parents, etc.]*

B. Do you have specific people in your area that you would recommend we talk to? *[Get contact information.]*

9. Do you have anything else you would like to add to help us guide the media vendor in creating the most successful TFS media campaign possible for NC?

10. Are there any other experts you think we should talk to? *[Get contact information.]*

Appendix B: Stakeholder Interview Form

1. Please tell me about your experience with TFS policy.

2. *[ASK A, B, or C, depending on situation.]* Based on your experience what would you identify as the most critical factors (people, issues, messages, arguments)

- a. associated with the successful adoption of TFS policy in your district?**
- b. associated with TFS policy not passing in your district?**
- c. related to the fact that your district has not pursued passing a 100% TFS policy?**

3. Think about your own beliefs about 100% TFS policy, as well as those of other people in your community, particularly those against TFS policy. What issues/themes/messages do you believe would be most effective in convincing people to support 100% TFS?

4. I am going to read you a list of ideas for messages that have been suggested to us by the literature or by other people in North Carolina, as well as a list of the kinds of people who might appear in ads. [Explain each one.] Which of these do you think would be most likely to convince people to support TFS? Which of these do you think would not work? Which do you think could be potentially controversial in NC? If you had to pick the best idea/actor, which would you pick? What about the worst?

	Likely to work	Not likely to work	Not sure	Controversial	Best	Worst
THEMES						
Importance of adult role modeling						
Increasing youth cessation and decreasing initiation						
Health effects of SHS						
Personalization of health risks – youth (ex: SHS effect – asthma)						
Other (non-health) impact on youth (ex: youth can't use bathroom)						
Experiences of successful TFS districts						
TFS is the norm in NC; schools & parents should be proud of change; kids are healthier						
Other _____						
ACTORS						
School administrators						
Parents						
Community members						
Politicians						
Well-known figures in NC						
Youth						
Other _____						

5. Are there any other people in your area that you would recommend we talk to? [Get contact information.]

6. Do you have anything else you would like to add that I haven't asked you about today?

Appendix C: Legislator Interview Form

As you may know, the definition of a “100% Tobacco Free School” is a school that has a policy that prohibits the use of tobacco products by anyone, including students, staff, and visitors, on school grounds or at school events at all times. This tobacco-free zone includes school premises, school vehicles, and school events, both indoors and outdoors, and both on and off school property. Currently, 51 out of 115 school districts in NC have a TFS policy. The media campaign that will launch in the fall will promote the enforcement of the policy in these 51 districts and the adoption of policy in the other 64.

- 1. Please think about your own beliefs about TFS policies, as well as those of your constituents. What kinds of messages do you think would be most effective in convincing people to support TFS?**

- 2. A. Which of these ad messages do you believe would best convince your colleagues in the legislature to support 100% Tobacco Free Schools policy?**
 - TFS are now the norm in NC. Almost half of our school districts are now tobacco free, and we should be proud of this growing movement in our state.

 - TFS are important because adults need to be good role models for youth. Teacher and parent actions on school campuses need to be consistent with the health lessons students are taught in classes. _____

 - A personal story about the health effects of secondhand smoke on a youth.

- B. How does your answer change when you think more specifically about party affiliation (or industry interests)?**

- C. What kinds of things do you think the ad campaign should definitely stay away from?**

- 3. Do you have anything else you would like to add?**