

# Implications of resource allocation decisions on the status of school tobacco programs

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## Purpose of Project

Through the Texas Tobacco Prevention Initiative sponsored by the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS), school-based tobacco prevention and control programs have been funded in study areas since School Year (SY) 2000. Prior to funding initiation in SY2004, budget constraints necessitated discontinuation of future funding to schools in designated geographic areas. To examine implications of funding decisions for SY2004 on school tobacco program status, three groups were compared: schools continuously funded, schools previously funded, but with funding discontinued, and schools never funded.

## Methods and Sample

The *Principal Survey* and *Health Coordinator Survey* were designed to correspond to the School Health Education Profile (SHEP) survey and SHEP Tobacco Module developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health education characteristics in middle and high schools. Both surveys were distributed in the Spring of 2004. Surveys were sent to all secondary schools who had been continuously funded from SY2002 to SY2004 (n=109), schools previously funded, but with funding discontinued for SY2004 (n=123), and schools never funded (n=70). The latter group have been included in the study as the comparison schools in the pilot area since SY2000. Overall, 49% of health coordinators and 58% of principals responded to the written questionnaires. Chi square tests were conducted. Significance levels were set at  $p \leq .05$ .

## Key Outcomes

Based on Health Coordinator responses, continuously funded schools reported ( $p \leq .05$ ) more frequently:

- teaching more tobacco lessons annually;
- using student-centered, interactive methods such as role-playing, simulations and use of peer educators;
- using state-recommended curricula;
- involving families;
- providing student cessation support programs in schools and the community; and
- having greater interest in staff development.

Principals from continuously funded schools reported more frequently:

- identifying a person to lead the program and having the presence of a district advocate.
- having extremely or moderately high school levels of activity to provide instruction on tobacco prevention, student cessation support, and teacher training for tobacco prevention (see Table 1).

Overall, previously funded schools approached the profiles of those never funded.

## Lessons Learned

The TDSHS-funded intervention has been consistently effective in promoting increased school activity in critical areas such as increased tobacco instruction, use of more effective curriculums and methods, involvement of families, and provision of student cessation support programs.

Since previously funded schools approached the profiles of those never funded, the need for planning for tobacco program maintenance after funding is discontinued is essential. Training and technical assistance can help schools plan for program continuation after funding expires.

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**Table 1. Percentage of schools extremely or moderately active in CDC *School Guidelines* components by funding status - 2004**

