

'Butting' In to Tackle Smoking

New Law Only Part of Strategy to Reduce Rates

Indiana touts many positives in the effort to attract and retain businesses: low taxes, hardworking employees and a supportive government among them.

But one black spot for the state is good health (or, the lack thereof).

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce's *Indiana Vision 2025* long-range economic development plan highlights health as a primary factor in economic prosperity. It points to smoking as a major deterrent and an entirely preventable problem.

The knowledge that smoking kills has not been enough for Hoosiers (and about 45 million Americans in all) to quit the dangerous practice. Business owners and community leaders are realizing smoking's costly toll – not only monetarily but on the population's health, productivity and individual financial success.

"The current adult smoking rate is 25%. We're talking one in four adults who identify themselves as a current smoker," asserts Miranda Spitznagle, director of tobacco prevention and cessation for the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH).

"Over \$2 billion in health care costs are attributed to tobacco use in the state of Indiana; over \$2 billion in lost productivity as well. This is a significant burden not only on health care but on economic costs across the state."

Established methods

There are a number of resources and strategies to curb smoking that are being employed and others that could be attempted.

Indiana Vision 2025 outlines several potential strategies to reach a goal of lowering the smoking rate to at least 15%. Those tactics include: passing comprehensive smoke-

The American Heart Association's Danielle Patterson works at the Statehouse to promote tobacco cessation and prevention policy.



free workplace legislation (the law, with exemptions, was enacted in 2012); considering higher tobacco taxes; promoting anti-smoking and cessation programs; and securing insurance coverage for smoking cessation.

A new tool from the Wellness Council of Indiana, in partnership with the Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission, is QUIT NOW, a free resource for Hoosier employers. It has been designed to help educate and support workers who are trying to stop smoking. Currently, the Wellness Council is working with 56 employers (and seeking more) as part of a pilot program.

The ISDH's approach includes maintaining the Indiana Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) and reinvigorating a three-pronged methodology as directed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC): "Well-funded sustained tobacco control programs, strong smoke-free air policies and high price of the product," Spitznagle says.

Ban leads to cessation for some

Though Indiana's first statewide smoke-free workplace law has only been in effect since July, Spitznagle points to noticeable results already.

"We run the Indiana Tobacco Quitline and during the first six months of the law, call volume was about 40% higher than the same time period the previous year," she contends. "This protects everyone from exposure to secondhand smoke, and as a secondary impact it does urge tobacco users to try to quit. There is an increased demand for cessation, as we would expect."

Mike Ripley, vice president of health care policy for the Chamber, highlights just how many businesses did not have previous smoke-free policies for their employees and customers.

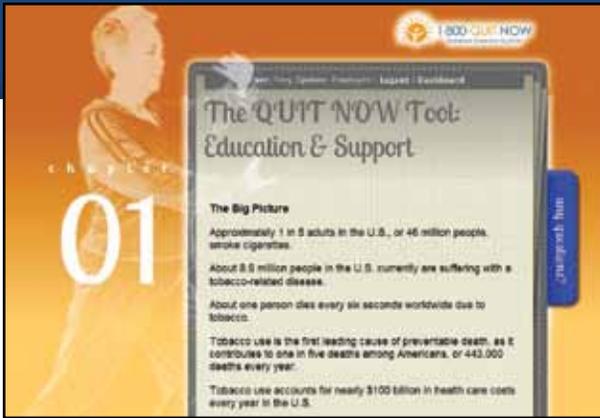
"I calculated on a survey that there were about 150 employers representing 31,000 employees, and that about one-third of those organizations had not implemented policies. And that's in a sample of just 150 workplaces," he describes.

One company that did have a workplace smoking policy in place is Central Indiana funeral center organization Flanner & Buchanan.

In the funeral business, caring about the needs of grieving families is a major part of the job. Directing those family members away from smoke-free areas could be awkward, but Ted Mau, chief administrative officer for Buchanan Group, notes that most people are respectful of the law.

What the ban has done is put increased awareness on the need to reduce smoking for Flanner & Buchanan employees.

"It's a very big issue that we think about as it relates to our health insurance. We do have programs available.



The Wellness Council of Indiana offers the QUIT NOW tool to employers as one strategy in trying to reduce the Hoosier smoking rate from 25% to under 15%.

We've really worked to promote the 1-800-QUIT-NOW program and there are five or six people that have at least signed up for that," he observes. "And we've had a couple people just kind of decided it was time for them to quit smoking. They're long-time smokers, and we're very supportive of what they're doing.

"We're finding what works for one person won't work for another. Motivation, finding the right key to unlock the door to that addiction and anything we can do to help our staff, that's what we want to do."

'Quit or die'

Another emerging idea is to consider tobacco harm reduction, which is the use of smokeless tobacco products such as strips, sticks, chews, snuff and electronic cigarettes.

Dr. Brad Rodu, professor of medicine at the University of Louisville, points to the problem that giving smokers only two options – "quit everything or take your chances" – isn't working.

Tobacco harm reduction is a possible answer to the "quit or die" strategy, maintains former Indiana congressman Steve Buyer, who is now a strategic consultant on harm reduction strategies for Reynolds American, Inc., parent company of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company.

"It's from operating an automobile to the food we eat, to (what we) drink. We do it (harm reduction) every day – and how do we apply it to tobacco? Tobacco is a legal substance, (we need to move) from use, to safer use, to a managed use, to abstinence. That's the migration pattern that we should be trying to take people," he states.

Danielle Patterson, Indiana government relations director for the American Heart Association, and Spitznagle both contend that all tobacco is unsafe and the goal should be to move away from its use altogether.

"The American Heart Association does not support tobacco harm reduction strategies. When you look at the whole idea behind this, it just doesn't make sense. One thing we keep focusing on is smoking. We need to reduce individuals' dependence on tobacco, period," Patterson asserts.

A look at Sweden

"The science is completely sound that smokeless

tobacco products are 98%-plus safer than smoking. We're not talking about something subtle. This has been proven by 50 years of epidemiological research," Rodu describes.

In Rodu's 2002 "Swedish Experience," he studied why smoking-related deaths in Sweden were lower than other European countries.

"Among developed countries and talking about men, Sweden has the lowest smoking rates and the lowest smoking-related death rates among all European countries for decades," he imparts. "It turns out that Swedish men prefer to use snus (Swedish for 'snuff') instead of cigarettes, so they've used a smoke-free product for decades.

"There is no way the smoky delivery system should be seen as equally dangerous with a smoke-free delivery system. Yes, these products all contain nicotine, and yes it is addictive, but from the health aspect, that attitude (that they are the same) is just not only wrong, but it's misleading Americans about the health risks."

Tobacco industry is supportive

Patterson says there aren't enough independent studies into the strategy for anyone to consider tobacco harm reduction safe.

Rodu's research is funded by unrestricted grants from tobacco manufacturers to the University of Louisville, but he says that the basis of tobacco harm reduction research has not been funded by the industry.

"People are going to be somewhat skeptical of tobacco industry claims, but no one is asking smokers to completely rely on tobacco industry information," Rodu acknowledges. "There is independent information there that does confirm the facts: that No. 1 these products are safer, and they are satisfying."

One resource, a 2007 study from British medical society The Royal College of Physicians, says "... that smokers smoke predominantly for nicotine, that nicotine itself is not especially hazardous, and that if nicotine could be provided in a form that is acceptable and effective as a cigarette substitute, millions of lives could be saved."

Buyer emphasizes that Hoosiers should be educated on other options for consuming tobacco – a legal product.

"Smoking is highly dangerous, and nicotine is highly addictive. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug and the challenge here as a society is that it's a legal product. As long as nicotine is a legal product, then we need to promote as a society a public policy to educate people with the comparative risk to make healthier choices. That is our goal," he concludes.

Patterson contends, "Tobacco companies are losing market share (as) cigarette consumption is going down. They've come up with these other products when people are in smoke-free environments. We need to move people off tobacco products altogether and not just give them

Continued on page 48

Smoking

Continued from page 37

another alternative.”

Ripley reinforces that if tobacco harm reduction could lower smoking rates and protect Hoosiers from dying of smoking-related diseases, he’s all for it.

“It’s not going to be easy to get (the smoking rate) from 25% to 15% without some major impetus,” he contends. “It is controversial; it’s a paradigm shift from what we’ve been taught. The folks that are anti-smoking are going to be opposed to it. But that’s not our role here; our role is to save lives and help create a better Indiana. We’ve got to move to decrease smoking.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Miranda Spitznagle, Indiana State Department of Health, at www.state.in.us/isdh

Danielle Patterson, American Heart Association, at www.heart.org

Steve Buyer, Reynolds American, at www.reynoldsamerican.com

Dr. Brad Rodu, University of Louisville, at louisville.edu

Ted Mau, Buchanan Group, at www.flannerbuchanan.com

Mike Ripley, Indiana Chamber of Commerce, at www.indianachamber.com