

## Examples: Investing in Prevention Saves Lives & Money

Long-term, sustained investments in comprehensive health promotion programs have been proven to result in substantial and rapid improvements in health outcomes, as well as reductions in per capita health care expenditures in many jurisdictions (1). In the well-evaluated field of tobacco control, research shows a clear dose-response relationship between spending on tobacco prevention and declines in smoking; the more jurisdictions invest in prevention, the greater the reductions in smoking, and the longer they sustain the funding, the larger the impact (2).

### The California Experience: California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP)

The California Tobacco Control Program was launched in 1989 and is an excellent illustration of how a long-term commitment to funding a comprehensive, evidence-based health promotion initiative can result in health-promoting behavior changes and reduce the burden of chronic disease on citizens and the health care system (3, 4).

#### Tobacco Consumption:

- Approximately **3.6 billion fewer packs of cigarettes were sold** between 1989 and 2004, than was predicted to be sold without the CTCP program (3).
- Between 1990 and 2008 California reported a **rapid decline in adult smoking** and cigarette consumption as well as **large reductions in youth smoking**; rates declined 38 percent faster in California compared to the rest of the US (4).

#### Health Outcomes:

- The CTCP was associated with **33,300 fewer deaths from heart disease** between 1989 and 1997 than the number of deaths otherwise predicted in the absence of the program (5).
- Between 1988 and 1997, **rates of lung cancer in California declined significantly**, compared to neighboring states without a comprehensive tobacco control program (6).
- In the first seven years of the CTCP, the program was associated with a **reduction in the number of smoking-caused low-birthweight babies** and more than \$100 million USD in related health care costs (7, 8).

#### Reduced Health Care Costs:

- Personal **health care expenditures in California were reduced by \$86 billion USD** between 1989 and 2004, representing an approximately **50-fold return on the \$1.8 billion USD spent on the CTCP** during the same period (3).

The experiences of the CTCP also highlight an important lesson for governments: **public health progress stalls when prevention funding is reduced.**

- When California cut its tobacco prevention funding in the mid-1990's, progress reducing adult and youth smoking stalled (9).
  - The diminished effectiveness of the program after 1992 was associated with 8300 more deaths from heart disease than would have been expected (5).
  - Had funding levels been maintained, savings in health care expenditures in California were projected to have increased to \$156 billion USD – an additional 70 billion in health cost savings (5).
- Florida experienced the same set-backs after funding cuts; declining smoking rates completely stopped, and in some age groups, even reversed (9).
- Overall, research in tobacco control has found that lung cancer death rates in states with high tobacco control efforts decrease (10), but increase in states with low tobacco control efforts (11).

## References

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