

Commercial Tobacco Policy Promotes Health in Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation Parks

Challenge

As of May 2013, parks and recreation areas on the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation did not have commercial tobacco* policies, and the idea of a tobacco-free park had never been discussed with decision makers.

Each year in South Dakota, more than 1,000 young people under the age of 18 become new daily smokers. Each day 45,000 youth are exposed to second-hand smoke in SD. More astonishingly, 18,000 youth under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking. Supporting commercial tobacco-free parks and recreation areas makes sense because it sends the right message...that commercial tobacco use is an unhealthy and unnecessary behavior.

**Please note that the term "tobacco" refers to commercially produced tobacco products only and never the traditional tobacco of our Northern Plains American Indians.*

Solution

Missouri Breaks Industries Research, Inc. (MBIRI) compiled an information sheet detailing facts on youth smoking initiation and health effects; why tobacco-free parks would help reduce the number of new youth smokers and improve health effects by reducing secondhand smoke exposure. They also created a sample tobacco-free park policy to share with decision makers when discussing the need for tobacco-free parks on Cheyenne River. By providing the facts for decision makers and a sample policy that could easily be adapted to meet each organization or municipality's needs, it made it very easy for the decision makers to turn the need for tobacco-free parks into a reality.

Summary

Participating agencies and municipalities that MBIRI worked with included Cheyenne River Tribal Housing Authority - Project Play Program, Eagle Butte Indian Health Service and City of Timber Lake City Council Members and Mayor.

Supporters made phone calls to each group asking for a meeting time to discuss the possibility of tobacco-free parks. MBIRI met with each group individually to discuss the need for tobacco-free parks for the health of children and others who use the parks. Secondhand smoke, tobacco litter, triggers for asthma attacks and the fact that many individuals support tobacco-free parks were all given as reasons to support the policy. MBIRI prepared a Tobacco-Free Fact Sheet and Sample Tobacco-Free Park Policy to support the discussions. Follow-up calls and meetings were held as needed until signed policies were in place and tobacco-free signage was secured for each park.

Start the Discussion

The first discussions occurred with the Cheyenne River Housing Authority Project Play Program Coordinator in June 2013, and by July, a signed Tobacco-Free Policy was in place. Discussions followed with the Indian Health Service Chief Executive Officer in Eagle Butte and with the Timber Lake City Council.

Being able to help municipalities and organizations inform park users about the tobacco-free park policy through proper signage is very important. Be willing to help find funds for signage. Better yet, take metal tobacco-free park signage with you. It is a great way to ensure proper signage is used.



Results

In July 2013, the Cheyenne River Housing Authority enacted a policy to ban commercial tobacco products including smokeless tobacco from the 24 Project Play Playground Sites across the Cheyenne River Reservation. They also banned commercial tobacco within 50 feet of the playground. They are currently in the process of putting up signage stating that the playground is tobacco free and no tobacco is to be used within 50 feet of the play area.

The Indian Health Service Unit at Eagle Butte expanded their commercial tobacco-free policy in May 2014 to include e-cigarettes and to cover a park which is in the process of being built. Signage for the park will indicate that no tobacco is allowed.

The Timber Lake City Council voted unanimously in September 2014 to ban commercial tobacco products from its city park and recreational facility to protect the health, safety and welfare of participants of all ages. This includes the entrances, picnic shelter, restrooms, playground area and other areas within the Timber Lake City Park.



You don't know if your parks can be tobacco-free or not if you don't take that first step and ask the decision makers.

*Corrine Huber and Rae O'Leary
Missouri Breaks Industries Research, Inc.*

We have nothing to lose by making our park tobacco free. It makes sense to give parents and kids the right to speak up about smoke-free air and to play in a playground that is free of tobacco litter.

Cheyenne River Community Leader



Successes

Initial success is having the discussion with organizations and policy makers on the need for tobacco-free parks. Further success is a tobacco-free policy for a park and recreational facility that is communicated to the public through signage. Each organization or municipality may have different needs depending on the park and recreational facility. Be prepared to help them modify and adapt the sample policy to fit their needs.

As new parks are built in the community, the discussion about being tobacco-free needs to take place.

Resources

www.facebook.com/CanliCoalitionOfCRST
www.goodandhealthysd.org

Local Contacts

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Get Involved!

Canli (Lakota for tobacco) Coalition members helped identify parks and key individuals to contact so MBIRI could have the initial conversations about the need for tobacco free parks. The Canli Coalition members are the eyes and ears across the community who knew when new parks were being planned like Indian Health Service park and the ones the Cheyenne River Housing Authority built. Coalition members are vital in keeping up with what is new and happening across Cheyenne River, so policies can be implemented or the existing ones updated for the health and safety of all.