

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe: the first reservation in South Dakota to become smoke-free in all indoor public places

Challenge

The Canli (Lakota for tobacco) Coalition coalition in Eagle Butte works on tobacco prevention, cessation and secondhand smoke exposure on the Cheyenne River Reservation. In 2009, the coalition set an ultimate goal to get a smoke-free air law passed by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (CRST). The South Dakota smoking ban did not protect persons residing on the Cheyenne River Reservation from secondhand smoke in enclosed public places because tribal sovereignty gives tribes the right to govern themselves. Smoke-free reservations are a fairly new concept so there were some setbacks, but coalition members remained determined to pave the way because they believed in the importance of giving everyone smoke-free air to breathe, on and off tribal reservations. Coalition members recognized the importance of educating the community on the dangers of commercial tobacco and secondhand smoke. With time, the tobacco education paid off and helped achieve buy-in from tribal council and community members on why the ordinance is necessary.

According to the 2012 American Indian Adult Tobacco Survey (AIATS), adult CRST tribal members have a smoking rate of 51%. Despite the high smoking rate, 76% of tribal members supported smoke-free indoor public places. Smokers and non-smokers agreed that reducing secondhand smoke exposure was important to protect the health of all generations.

Solution

Community education on the dangers of secondhand smoke was provided through a multifaceted approach by Canli Coalition members and Missouri Breaks Industries Research Inc. professionals. They educated local residents through social media, news columns, stories, newspaper ads, posters, digital stories and community fact sheets. A banner was used to collect signatures of individuals who supported smoke-free air. The banner was used by the local Teens Against Tobacco Use group and coalition members at basketball games and other community events. As signatures were collected, members educated the public on the dangers of commercial tobacco and secondhand smoke.

The Canli Coalition was able to facilitate the adoption and implementation of the Smoke-Free Air Act, which has made public environments healthier by eliminating secondhand smoke. Additionally community members of all ages were empowered throughout the process and learned valuable life skills to bring policy change for future initiatives. New leaders and champions also resulted from the process.

Summary

The Canli Coalition started in 2009 and the Smoke-Free Air Act was passed by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in April 2015. It took effect for all businesses and individuals on the Cheyenne River Reservation on May 1, 2015. It prohibits smoking and e-cigarettes in all enclosed public buildings including restaurants, bars and the bingo hall. The ban also prohibits smoking within 50 feet of entrances to public buildings.

Getting Support for the Smoke-Free Air Act

- The coalition worked with the Tobacco Control Legal Consortium at the Public Health Law Center and a local tribal attorney to draft the Smoke-Free Air Act
- They took the Smoke-Free Air Act forward several times to the Tribal Health Committee before it was passed by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council
- Tribal Leaders asked for more community education to take place with persons of all ages, especially youth
- There was a 30 day comment period after the Smoke-Free Air Act passed
- Coalition members asked community members to submit letters of support to the CRST Tribal Secretary during the comment period
- Letters were necessary to prove the need for the ordinance if opposition letters or individuals came forward at the June 2015 Tribal Council Meeting when the ordinance was reviewed



Results

Since the Smoke-Free Air Act became law, businesses and the public have taken the smoking ban very seriously and are compliant with the new law. As a result, all employees and patrons of businesses across the reservation get to breathe clean, smoke-free air. People of all ages have said how great it is to be protected from secondhand smoke in indoor public places. The American Indian population faces many health disparities, but because of the Smoke-Free Air Act, reduced initiation among youth and increased smoking cessation is expected.

A contributing factor to the success of the Smoke-Free Air Act was a mailed packet to each private business, tribal, BIA, state, and county office on the Cheyenne River Reservation. The business packet contained a letter from the CRST Tribal Chairman and served as the official notification that the Smoke-Free Air Act of 2015 Tribal Ordinance 77 had been passed and would take effect on May 1, 2015. The letter clarified what business owners needed to do to follow the ordinance for enforcement, what and how civil violations would be handled and clarified definitions used in the ordinance. The packet contained a letter that business owners could give to employees detailing the ordinance and employees responsibilities to follow the ordinance. A fact sheet on the benefits of smoke-free environments was also provided for education. Additionally the packet contained laminated "No Smoking Within 50 Feet of Doors and Windows" signs and Smoke-Free CRST window clings for owners to post.



WHAT YOU PERMIT YOU PROMOTE
Enforced by CRST Tribal Law Enforcement

Successes

This effort could not have been achieved without the youth and elders who were willing to speak to their family, friends and tribal council members about their desire to live on a smoke-free reservation. Being the first tribe in South Dakota to have a 100% smoke-free policy in place, we hope other tribes across the state and region will also make policy changes to give their members equal protection from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

CRST hopes that the positive momentum that is taking place on their reservation can be used by the eight other tribes in South Dakota that do not yet have a comprehensive smoking policy. The success of the CRST Smoke-Free Air Act proves that smoke-free air can be achieved anywhere with patience, passion and perseverance!

Resources

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

Local Contacts

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Get Involved!

Many volunteers are needed to bring policy change to a community. The Canli Coalition had many volunteers that helped in a variety of ways to get the Smoke-Free Air Act passed. A huge thank you goes out to all volunteers for doing their part to create a legacy that will protect generations of children. However, the work is not done. It will take participation from law enforcement, businesses, Canli Coalition members and general public to make sure that the policy remains law and is being enforced.