



What you need to know about...

Tobacco Use and Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, accounting for approximately one of every five deaths in the U.S. each year. People with mental illnesses and/or substance abuse disorders use tobacco at rates two to three times higher than the general population. They also suffer greater smoking-related medical illnesses and mortality; they account for nearly half of all tobacco-related deaths annually.

How does smoking affect client health?

- Tobacco appears to affect the same neural pathway – the mesolimbic dopamine system – as alcohol, opioids, cocaine and marijuana.
- Tobacco use impedes recovery of brain function among individuals whose brains have been damaged by chronic alcohol use.
- Alcoholic smokers experience an increased urge to drink when they smell cigarettes.
- Among treated narcotic addicts, the death rate of smokers is four times that of non-smokers.

Steps to reduce tobacco use

Treatment facilities are in a unique position to reduce the alarming statistics related to tobacco use by providing a smoke-free recovery environment coupled with smoking cessation interventions.

A smoke-free treatment campus also results in reduced exposure to the health hazards of smoking and improved health of clients, employees and visitors, as well as decreased maintenance costs and increased credibility of treatment facilities

as advocates and role models for healthy lifestyles. Employee smoking prevalence will also decrease when the environment does not support or promote smoking.

How we can help

The Chicago Tobacco Prevention Project (CTPP) is a collaborative effort between Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago and Chicago Department of Public Health. The project goal is to implement citywide policies designed to decrease tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke in Chicago.

CTPP can offer services to treatment centers that pledge to go smoke-free campus-wide. Services include:

- Technical assistance with policy language, development and implementation planning
- Training for treatment center staff to deliver smoking cessation services to clients
- Materials including signage and literature
- Development of a site-specific cessation campaign to direct clients and staff to cessation resources

For more information, please contact Anne Dienethal, Policy Coordinator for the Chicago Tobacco Prevention Project, at (312) 628-0199 or by email at adienethal@lungchicago.org.