

## **Prevention and Cessation of Tobacco Use in Children and Adolescents: Primary Care Interventions**

July 9, 2019

Dear Members of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force:

On behalf of Men's Health Network (MHN), I would like to submit comments on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's Draft Research Plan for Interventions to Prevent and Stop Tobacco Use in Youth. MHN is a national organization whose mission is to reach men, boys and their families where they live, work, play and pray with health prevention messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States,<sup>1</sup> and unfortunately, it is not only an issue adults face, but youth do as well. According to a May 2018 CDC study,<sup>2</sup> "the prevalence of adolescent self-reported cigarette smoking ranged from 4.5% (standard error [SE], 0.9%) in Utah to 14.3% (SE, 1.3%) in Wyoming..." Youth tobacco use stems from a range of issues, however, one issue that is often pushed under the rug when considering preventive measures is cultural influences.

Studies have shown that there is an inverse relationship to religiosity and tobacco use. Religion is a cultural issue. Many cultures have their own religious principles, and others have none. It is not the job of the USPSTF to push a religious agenda, nor should that be done. The data, however, indicate that having a lifestyle focused on some kind of religious beliefs has led to lower incidences of self-reported tobacco use.<sup>3</sup>

A strong preventive measure that can lead to stopping youth from getting involved with tobacco use is focusing on creating a strong family environment. Strong family environments often, but not always, thrive when a religious aspect is integrated into a family's lifestyle. Having a good example and proper education from parents can lead youth to make better decisions in avoiding the use of tobacco.

Health education comes on two fronts: health professionals, such as family practitioners and OB/GYN's from the professional side, and parents from the familial side. Preventing youth involvement with tobacco requires that parents educate their children on the dangers and addictive qualities of using tobacco. A healthy family influence combined

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fast\\_facts/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/index.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2018/17\\_0345.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2018/17_0345.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <http://midus.wisc.edu/findings/pdfs/1454.pdf> (See tables 2 and 3)

with proper education can lead youth to making safer and smarter decisions about their health.

Health professionals have the responsibility of helping people live and remain healthy. Part of their job is also education. Health professionals need to educate parents on the risks and dangers of youth involvement in tobacco use. Proper education from professionals gives parents a strong foundation to decide what to teach their children, but the education must be done.

Health professionals have the knowledge and tools to teach parents about the consequences of youth tobacco use. Parents have the responsibility to educate their children. As you consider your draft research plan for preventing and stopping tobacco use in youth, we urge the USPSTF to consider including information and materials regarding the importance of proper and healthy education to successfully reach the goal to stop youth tobacco use

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this topic.

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