

The National Partnership on Behavioral Health and Tobacco Use

Healthier, Smoke-free Lives for People with Mental Illnesses and Substance Use Disorders



Adults with mental health and/or substance use disorders represent 25% of the population, but account for ~40% of all cigarettes smoked in the US

Despite great strides in reducing tobacco use and its devastating health consequences, certain groups of people have not benefitted from this progress. Chief among them are those with mental illness and/or substance use disorders, collectively known as behavioral health conditions. In October 2016, the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center (SCLC) at the University of California, San Francisco convened leaders from the tobacco control/public health and behavioral health sectors to develop a plan to expand and accelerate efforts to combat disparities in smoking prevalence and tobacco treatment for those with mental health and substance use disorders. Participants included senior officials of health professional organizations, federal agencies, not-for-profit health organizations and experts in behavioral health and tobacco prevention and cessation.

Smoking is becoming a social justice issue

The summit produced a national action plan setting forth practical strategies in the areas of networking, education and clinical guidance to strengthen tobacco use prevention, increase cessation, and ultimately reduce smoking prevalence in the behavioral health population. The participating organizations and agencies also set a target to reduce smoking prevalence among adults with behavioral health conditions to 30% by 2020. This target was met more quickly than anticipated, in early 2018. When the group convened its second leadership summit in November 2018 to assess progress and redefine strategies, a new and even more ambitious target was established to reduce smoking prevalence among those with behavioral health conditions to 20% by 2022 (#20by22).

Since the inaugural summit, the partnership has expanded with new members and new strategies have been developed in the areas of communication, peer and provider education, policy, systems-change, and data research. Every participating organization and agency made commitments to take specific, concrete actions to educate and guide their constituencies of professionals and consumers. Together, working towards our goal of #20by22, we could save 1 million lives. It is time to pay special attention to this growing, hidden epidemic.

Get involved

For more information on the partnership or how to get involved, please contact Jennifer Lucero at email: Jennifer.Lucero3@ucsf.edu
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Smoking Cessation
Leadership Center



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