

POLICY SOLUTIONS

Clean Indoor Air: Smoke Free Michigan

What is the Problem:

Tobacco use is a life threatening addiction. According to a recent randomized survey, 26% of Berrien County residents are current smokers. 17,000 Michiganders die every year of tobacco-related illness with an estimated 260 deaths in Berrien County directly caused by smoking. Tobacco kills more people in Berrien County than AIDS, alcohol, auto accidents, fires, cocaine, heroin, murders and suicide—COMBINED.

An estimated 53,000 deaths occur annually among adult nonsmokers in the United States as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Tobacco use is also an economic problem. Each resident of Berrien County pays approximately \$343 each year to treat smoking related illnesses including ambulatory care, hospital, prescription drugs, nursing homes and other personal care.

Needed Outcomes:

There are tremendous benefits for those who quit smoking, including reducing their risk of dying prematurely. In addition, smoking reduces the risk of other non-smokers who would be inhaling second-hand smoke.

Of those who currently smoke in Berrien County, 63% attempted to quit during the past 12 months by stopping smoking for one day or longer. Every attempt should be made to create an environment that best enables all individuals to stop using tobacco.

Current Solutions:

In June of 2007 the Berrien County Commissioners, at the urging of the Berrien County Health Department, passed the Berrien County Clean Indoor Air Regulation. This regulation ensures that all indoor areas, with the exception of bars, restaurants and tobacco shops, are to be smoke free. Bars and restaurants are exempt at the state level.

There is a Berrien County Tobacco Reduction Coalition staffed by the Berrien County Health Department that is charged with enforcement of the regulation as well as coordinating education, awareness and cessation of tobacco use.

What Can Policy Makers DO?

Funding to support these programs comes from the Healthy Michigan Fund Program and through Local Public Health Operation dollars. Michigan cannot afford to cut the Tobacco Prevention Program—it will INCREASE health care costs for the state and businesses, it will ELIMINATE matching funds, and it will lead to more kids starting to smoke.

There are bills in the state legislature that will help to establish clean indoor air in Michigan. These bills would prohibit smoking in public places, in places of employment, and in food service establishments, such as restaurants and bars.

In addition. The Berrien County Health Department requests your yes vote to any bill that assures smoke free air in Michigan.

