

## **SOUTH CAROLINA CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES GO TOBACCO-FREE**

*New policy protects the health of over 30,000 inmates and correctional employees*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Many people die prematurely from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke or have a serious illness caused by one of these exposures to smoke.
- A lawsuit filed by a South Carolina man with asthma resulted in a judgment that his rights were violated when he was exposed to secondhand smoke in prison and he received a significant financial settlement.
- Adopting a tobacco-free policy and providing resources to help people quit smoking is an effective strategy for preventing premature death and illness caused by exposure to smoke.

### **Program**

- The director of the South Carolina Department of Corrections identified health as a priority for his tenure in this agency, which employs almost six thousand people and houses tens of thousands of inmates across twenty-eight institutions.
- Implementing a ‘best practice’ for tobacco control with assistance from South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Region 3 staff, the agency adopted a tobacco-free policy and offered tobacco cessation to employees and inmates in addition to the already-available nicotine replacement therapy.
- With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, staff trained facilitators at three sites participating in a pilot to implement the American Cancer Society’s Fresh Start program, a group-based tobacco cessation counseling program.
- The tobacco-free policy was implemented gradually, beginning with five facilities and utilizing resources such as the free South Carolina Tobacco Quitline.

### **Impact**

- A tobacco-free policy now protects the health of more than 30,000 employees and inmates from exposure to secondhand smoke after an implementation with few reported problems.
- South Carolina’s Department of Corrections is now on the level of federal prisons which preceded them in becoming tobacco-free.

### **Contact**

Suzanne Sanders

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

803-576-2854

sandersh@dhec.sc.gov

