



Benton County Health Department

530 NW 27th Street
P.O. Box 579
Corvallis, OR 97339-0579

Main Line: 541-766-6835 • Administration FAX: 541-766-6142 • Medical Records FAX: 541-766-6186
Developmental Disabilities: 541-766-6847 • Environmental Health: 541-766-6841
Telecommunications Relay Service: TTY 1-800-735-2900 • Website: www.co.benton.or.us/health

Person-Centered Behavioral & Physical Health Care Public Health & Prevention Regulatory and Population Health Health Management Services

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services Public Testimony on SB 5526 April 2nd, 2015

Good morning Co-Chairs Senator Bates and Representative Nathanson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Sara Hartstein and I am the Health Policy Specialist at the Benton County Health Department. I am here today, on behalf of our Health Administrator, Charlie Fautin supporting additional investments in public health to ensure that all women in Oregon have access to reproductive health services; there is capacity in our state to meet the rising tide of reportable disease; and to ensure that we continue to prevent the major drivers of death and disease in Oregon.

Today I would like to primarily tell you about the work we are doing in Benton County and throughout our region to reduce tobacco use with Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (TMSA) dollars. Our local health department, along with our colleagues at Linn and Lincoln County Health Departments, has developed outstanding regional partnerships with our Coordinated Care Organization (CCO), InterCommunity Health Network (IHN).

Tobacco use is a major insurance cost-driver, and IHN-CCO's membership has the second highest tobacco use rate of any CCO. The CCO is an active partner for a regional tobacco prevention project titled Strategies for Policy and Environmental Change, Tobacco-Free (SPArC). The SPArC grant is funded by TMSA funds that were allocated specifically for tobacco prevention in the current state budget. While IHN-CCO can and does provide tobacco cessation benefits for members, they are also aware that the vast sums spent on tobacco marketing means that cessation is an endless and expensive treadmill – and that community level tobacco prevention is necessary to reduce the number of smokers and thereby lower Medicaid costs.

Our regional SPArC project combines the expertise of the CCO in clinical interventions, with the training and expertise of local health departments in community interventions such as working with social service agencies to implement tobacco-free property policies, and counties and municipalities to adopt strong local tobacco and e-cigarette ordinances that build on, supplement, and enhance state statutes.

The TMSA funding we receive for this work supports a region-wide, public, private, and non-profit partnership. Without the TMSA funding we would not have been able to offer support to over 100 social service agencies in the Linn, Benton, Lincoln region to implement tobacco-free property policies and help clients quit; convene a clinical team of public health, CCO and Samaritan Health Services staff to conduct comprehensive assessment of tobacco cessation efforts within the health system; and partner with our CCO to ensure all pregnant mothers are screened for tobacco and get help to quit.

If SPArC funding goes away our capacity to continue this new work will be severely limited. We will no longer be able to support the staff who works with social service agencies to help low-income persons quit tobacco; help IHN-CCO implement tobacco screening and cessation for all its members; or help pregnant mothers overcome barriers to quitting tobacco.

In addition to our tobacco work, Benton County Health Department also works with our community to improve access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity among low-income families and individuals – through funding provided by the public health department for the “Healthy Communities” program. Through this funding, local health department staff have improved access to community gardens and farmer’s markets for low-income families; led a park renovation project in order to improve physical activity for local residents through a community engagement process; and worked with our local parks and recreation department to offer healthy foods in vending machines and healthy meals during summer camps for kids.

Continuing the funding of local prevention work with additional TMSA dollars is essential to furthering and strengthening the ability of our communities to address the leading causes of death and disease for all Oregonians.

On behalf of the Benton County Health Department, I urge you to support the funding of this important public health work.