

South Dakota Teens and Tobacco

Tobacco addiction often starts with children. Nearly 90% of the adult smokers in this country took that first puff before age 19. Despite vigorous campaigns about the dangers of tobacco use, the tobacco companies are winning the battle for new consumers nationwide and in South Dakota.

Selling tobacco to minors (under the age of 18) is illegal. However, alarming numbers of South Dakota teens are finding ways to buy and use tobacco. Moreover, tobacco use among minors is rising despite a decade-long campaign by the South Dakota Tobacco Free KIDS Network. The following statistics, based on South Dakota's 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, were taken from the www.sdtobaccofree.org website.

Underage Tobacco Use in South Dakota

- 28.2% of high school students smoke.
- 20% of male high school students use smokeless or spit tobacco, with 6% admitting to using smokeless tobacco on school property.
- 55% have tried cigarette smoking, even just one or two puffs.
- 1,300 children under the age of 18 become new daily smokers each year.
- 2.6 million packs of cigarettes are bought and smoked by children each year.

Tobacco's Impact on Underage South Dakotans

- 45,000 children are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.
- 18,000 children now under 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

Tobacco's Economic Impact on South Dakota

- Annual health care costs directly related to smoking are at \$274,000,000.
- The State Medicaid program assumes \$58,000,000 of that cost.
- Resident's state and federal tax burden from smoking-related government costs is \$575 per household.
- Smoking-caused productivity losses are \$228,000,000 annually.

Tobacco Industry's Marketing Influence in South Dakota

- \$37.7 million is spent in our state every year on tobacco marketing.
- Children are twice as sensitive to tobacco advertising than adults and are more likely to be influenced to smoke by cigarette marketing than by peer pressure.
- An estimated one-third of underage smoking is closely related to tobacco company advertising.

South Dakota Middle and High School Tobacco-Use Policies

- Only 23% prohibit tobacco use in all locations: school buildings and grounds, school vehicles, and off-campus school-sponsored events.
- Only 28% of schools with tobacco-free policies require students caught using tobacco to participate in an assistance, education, or cessation program.
- 85% prohibited all tobacco advertising, as on student clothing or gear.
- 60% post signs marking a tobacco-free school zone.



South Dakota Teens and Tobacco, cont.

Keep in mind that the tobacco industry often targets young smokers by putting marketing materials where youngsters are most likely to spend money: convenience stores. Tobacco industries also place ads in teen-popular magazines. And don't forget that all the cool bad guys in the movies smoke. Smoking looks so adult and dangerous and sophisticated to kids. Yes, it is illegal to sell tobacco to minors in 50 states of the union, but somehow alarming numbers of South Dakota teens are getting those products. Interestingly, it is not illegal to sell tobacco to anyone of any age over the Internet.

Many middle and high schools in South Dakota have strict tobacco use policies but the majority do not. Get involved with your school's anti-tobacco campaign.

If your child is smoking, you will want to help him or her quit. It's a good idea to start with a physical examination by your family doctor. Ask for a referral to any local smoking cessation resource. This is a serious addiction, and it's very difficult to just quit. Your child will need help. Also check out the South Dakota QuitLine (1-866-SD-QUITS). If you smoke, set the example and quit smoking with your child. Better yet, quit smoking before your child decides to use you as a role model. Most smokers grew up with at least one smoking parent.

For more information on teen tobacco use and South Dakota resources, please visit:

<http://www.sdtobaccofree.org/toll.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/states/sd.htm>

<http://www.befreesd.com>