

**SOME OF THE
135 LOCAL
ORGANIZATIONS
that have endorsed
Tobacco21|KC**

**American Academy
of Family Physicians**

**American Heart
Association**

**American Lung
Association**

**Black Health Care
Coalition**

**Children's Mercy
Hospital**

**Greater Kansas City
Dental Society**

**Metropolitan Medical
Society**

**Mid-America Coalition
on Health Care**

Park University

**Saint Luke's Health
System**

Truman Medical Center

**University of Kansas
Cancer Center**

Policy Statement on Increasing the Age of Sale for Tobacco Products to 21

Background

Cigarettes are the only legal consumer product that, when used as intended, kill up to one-third of regular users. Unfortunately, a full 95% of current adult smokers began their habit before the age of 21. Youth smoking in both Missouri and Kansas remains above the national average. While youth cigarette smoking has declined in previous years, e-cigarette use has more than doubled and recent research suggests a high rate of conversion from electronic cigarettes to traditional tobacco products.

Youth smoking is particularly problematic since the adolescent brain is uniquely susceptible to addiction. Until the mid-20s, the human brain is still developing its decision making capacity and impulse control. As a result, young people are disproportionately responsive to peer pressure and sensation seeking. This creates a neurological “perfect storm” for nicotine addiction.

Tobacco21 policies increase the age of sale for tobacco products to 21. Since most teens report getting their tobacco products from older teens, Tobacco21 policies cut off the supply chain to reduce teen smoking. Over 80% of area high school seniors are older than 18 on graduation day; they are the supply chain for those below 18. Delaying youth tobacco use until after age 21 decreases the likelihood of addiction. In fact, those who have had their first cigarette by age 18 are twice as likely to become lifelong smokers as those who have not tried smoking by age 21.

The first city to enact such a policy was Needham, Massachusetts, where data demonstrated a 46% drop in youth smoking, more than doubled the reduction in neighboring communities. In recognition of this tremendous public health impact, 104 cities in seven states have passed Tobacco21 policies.

Rationale for HCF Support

HCF is a leader of Tobacco21|KC, a campaign of the HealthyKC effort. HealthyKC is spearheaded by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce with support from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas City and hundreds of community partners. Tobacco21|KC offers an opportunity to bring the health and business voices together in support of a proven strategy to reduce youth smoking, which will eventually lead to a healthier workforce in the region and a lower tobacco-related disease burden.

Unlike so many issues that require state law changes, Tobacco21|KC strives to work city-by-city throughout the region. Such local efforts hold incredible potential for HCF where our voice, relationships, and convening authority can have significant impact.

KEY TALKING POINTS

- 1 More than 95% of long-term smokers started before age of 21. This is problematic since the adolescent brain is still developing and therefore uniquely susceptible to addiction.
- 2 Tobacco21|KC has support from the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and nearly 150 endorsing community organizations.
- 3 The first city to enact such a policy was Needham, Massachusetts, where data demonstrated a 46% drop in youth smoking, more than doubled the reduction in neighboring communities. In recognition of this tremendous public health impact, 104 cities in seven states have passed Tobacco21 policies.