



APRIL 21, 2021

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN ST. LUCIE TO “UPROOT THE TRUTH” ABOUT TOBACCO’S HARMFUL EFFECTS ON BLACK COMMUNITIES

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Fort Pierce, FLA. – Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie will use the upcoming Tobacco Free Florida Week to draw attention to the root causes of tobacco’s deadly toll on St. Lucie County’s Black population. With social justice issues being at the forefront of recent public discussion, the week of action will be themed **Uproot the Truth: Tobacco Use in the Black Community**.

Beginning Sunday, April 25 and coinciding with the conclusion of National Minority Health Month, the local and statewide campaign will examine the deep, institutional reasons for the inequality in health outcomes associated with the Black community and tobacco use.

Tobacco’s deadly health effects play a major role in nearly all leading causes of death among African Americans in Florida, including heart disease, cancer, and stroke.^{1,2,3}

During Tobacco Free Florida Week, Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie will work to **Uproot the Truth** by exposing some of the underlying reasons for this health disparity. Statewide, data shows that that non-Hispanic Blacks in Florida are less likely than the overall population to have healthcare coverage and more likely to report not seeing a doctor in the past year due to cost.⁴

African-American communities are also disproportionately targeted by predatory marketing, advertising, and sponsorship campaigns from Big Tobacco.^{5,6} These initiatives often promote products such as menthol cigarettes, which are proven to be even more addictive and more toxic.⁷

*“We have seen firsthand the major health problems that are caused by lack of access, inequality in care, struggles with insurance and other root causes,” said Clint Sperber, Florida Department of Health Administrator. “The **Uproot the Truth** campaign will highlight the ways tobacco has consistently had such deadly impact on our Black community across St. Lucie and across the state.”*

Aligned with concerns regarding the lack of access to healthcare, Tobacco Free Florida offers a wide array of medically proven cessation services completely free and regardless of insurance.

“Quit Your Way” services include Phone Quit, Group Quit, Web Quit, text support and more. Those interested in quitting or helping a loved one quit can call 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (877-822-6669) or visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway.

Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie encourages people across the state to use Tobacco Free Florida Week, beginning April 25, to learn more and share information on the social justice issues connected to tobacco as a leading preventable cause of death and disease throughout Florida’s Black community. More information regarding the campaign can be found at www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/uproot.

About Tobacco Free Florida

The Florida Department of Health’s Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida’s tobacco settlement fund. Since the program began in 2007, more than 254,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida’s free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there was 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs.⁸ To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida’s Quit Your Way services, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

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¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 1998. Accessed September 14, 2020.

² Kochanek KD, Murphy SL, Xu JQ, Tejada-Vera B. [Deaths: Final Data for 2014 pdf icon\[PDF–2.95 MB\]](#). National Vital Statistics Reports, 2016;vol 65: no 4. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Accessed September 14, 2020.

³ Heron, M. [Deaths: Leading Causes for 2010 pdf icon\[PDF–5.08 MB\]](#). National Vital Statistics Reports, 2013;62(6). Accessed September 14, 2020.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Prevalence and Trends Data, 2019. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. Accessed March 3, 2021.

⁵ National Cancer Institute. [The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use](#). Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 19, NIH Pub. No. 07-6242, June 2008. Accessed July 21, 2020.

⁶ Food and Drug Administration. [Preliminary Scientific Evaluation of the Possible Public Health Effects of Menthol Versus Nonmenthol Cigarettes \[PDF–1.6 MB\]external icon](#). 2013. Accessed September 14, 2020.

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 1998. Accessed September 14, 2020.

⁸Mann, Nathan M, Nonnemaker, James M., Thompson, Jesse. "Smoking-Attributable Health Care Costs in Florida and Potential Health Care Cost Savings Associated with Reductions in Adult Smoking Prevalence." 2016.