

Youth-Driven Advocacy: Using Creative Expression to Influence Tobacco Policy and Community Change



Erika Rachelle Dugay-Alarcio, MPH; Ashly Castillo | Youth Leadership Institute, San Mateo County, California

Introduction

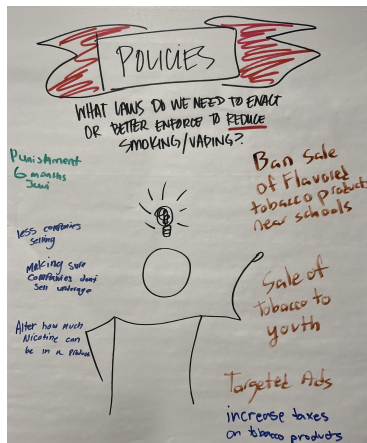
- Commercial tobacco use continues to impact both indoor and outdoor environments, disproportionately affecting youth and historically marginalized communities.
- The San Mateo County Tobacco Education Coalition Youth Advisory Group (YAG) is dedicated to raising awareness about tobacco use, encouraging help seeking behaviors, and educating the community on youth tobacco prevention with a social equity focus.
- Youth Leadership Institute led leadership training workshops that used creative expression to amplify youth voices in tobacco prevention and community change.

Youth Advisory Group Activities

- Monthly YAG Meetings
- Guest Speaker Presentations
- Photovoice
- Public Service Announcement Contest
- Leadership Training Workshops
- Community Events
 - Tobacco Education Coalition Meetings
 - Youth Quest
 - World No Tobacco Day

Community Partners

- City of Redwood City
- San Mateo County Health
- San Mateo County Office of Education
- San Mateo County Tobacco Education Coalition: Retail Workgroup
- Taulama for Tongans
- Youth Leadership Institute



Successes

- Participants used creative storytelling methods to articulate personal experiences and tobacco-related concerns.
- Strong multi-sector collaboration between education, health, and community-based organizations.
- Guest speakers, including those with lived experiences, helped ground prevention efforts in real-world stories and health equity.

Challenges

- Difficulty in engaging and representing the full diversity of San Mateo County's population.
- Maintaining consistent participation from youth during the program period.

I don't believe smoking in public places is respectful to other people or the environment.
It can harm the health of others and negatively impact the environment.
When a person smokes in a public space, they are not just damaging their health, but the health of everyone in their vicinity.
Smoking in public places also harms the environment.

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Smoking in public places also harms the environment.
It's not fair or respectful to pose this risk on innocent bystanders, especially children, who want to go about their days.
It can also potentially harm our natural environment.

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- Alva S., 12th Grade