

Tobacco Surveillance Data Brief:

Print Coverage of Tobacco News & CTCP Programs

A joint effort between the Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) and the UMDNJ-School of Public Health, Center for Tobacco Surveillance and Evaluation Research (CTSER). CTCP is administratively located in the Public Health Services Branch, Division of Family Health Services

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Introduction

News media coverage of tobacco issues can work to provide the public with important health information regarding tobacco and its health effects and communicate that tobacco control remains an important (i.e., “newsworthy”) issue deserving of attention (NCI, 2008). In addition, news coverage can work to promote and educate the public about state and community tobacco prevention and cessation resources that may be available to them. Previous research has used content analysis to describe the content and prevalence of tobacco-related news (NCI, 2008). As part of the overall evaluation of the New Jersey Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program (CTCP), the UMDNJ School of Public Health has collected and content-analyzed tobacco-related clippings from over 200 New Jersey newspapers since September 2000. This media tracking system codes clippings for their content and includes specific codes for mention and promotion of CTCP programs including REBEL, an anti-tobacco youth group with school and county chapters; Community Partnerships for a Tobacco-Free NJ, county-based anti-tobacco coalitions that work with community partners; and state-funded cessation services, including NJ Quitline, NJ Quitnet, and NJ Quitcenters. This report will provide a broad look at coverage of tobacco-related news and CTCP funded programs by article type in NJ newspapers during Fiscal Years 2005 – 2008.

Coverage of Tobacco-Related News

From FY 2005 to FY 2008 (i.e., July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2008), a total of 15,870 news clippings (including 9929 unique and 5941 duplicate articles) from New Jersey-based newspapers made mention of smoking or tobacco. These clippings were collected from both daily (54.4%) and weekly (45.6%) newspapers, and consisted primarily of news/feature articles (54.6%) (see Table 2).

Table 1: Number and Types of News Clippings Mentioning Smoking or Tobacco, by Fiscal Year

	News/ Feature	Letter to Editor	Editorial	Listing/ Announcement	Cartoon/ Photo-Only	TOTAL
FY 05	1772	501	307	789	75	3444 (21.7%)
FY 06	2535	874	513	926	150	4998 (31.5%)
FY 07	2197	320	284	916	95	3812 (24.0%)
FY 08	2132	360	221	825	78	3616 (22.8%)
Totals	8636 (54.4%)	2055 (12.9%)	1325 (8.3%)	3456 (21.8%)	398 (2.5%)	15870 (100%)

The total number of tobacco-related clippings increased by approximately 5% from FY 2005 to FY 2008. Overall, the greatest number of clippings occurred during Fiscal Year 2006, coinciding with the passage and enactment of the NJ Smoke-Free Air Act, the statewide indoor smoking ban.

Coverage of CTCP Programs

Figure 1 presents the number of tobacco-related clippings (excluding advertisements) from New Jersey papers that mentioned or focused on any of three main CTCP programs: REBEL, Community Partnerships, and NJ Quit services (including NJ Quitline, Quitnet and Quitcenters). Across the four fiscal years, 453 clippings mentioned REBEL, 716 mentioned a NJ Community Partnership, and 695 mentioned one of three available NJ Quit services. There were fewer newspaper clippings mentioning REBEL and Community Partnerships in FY 2008 compared to FY 2005, while newspaper clippings mentioning a NJ Quit service were somewhat greater in FY 2008 compared to other years. Overall, the total annual number of tobacco clippings mentioning any of these CTCP programs decreased by 28.9% (from 570 to 405) from FY 2005 to FY 2008. The majority of articles citing each program were found in weekly rather than daily newspapers. Specifically, 62.5% of all REBEL articles, 72.1% of Community Partnership articles, and 58.4% of Quit service articles were run in a weekly news publication.

Figure 1: Number of Tobacco-Related Clippings Mentioning each CTCP Program, by Fiscal Year

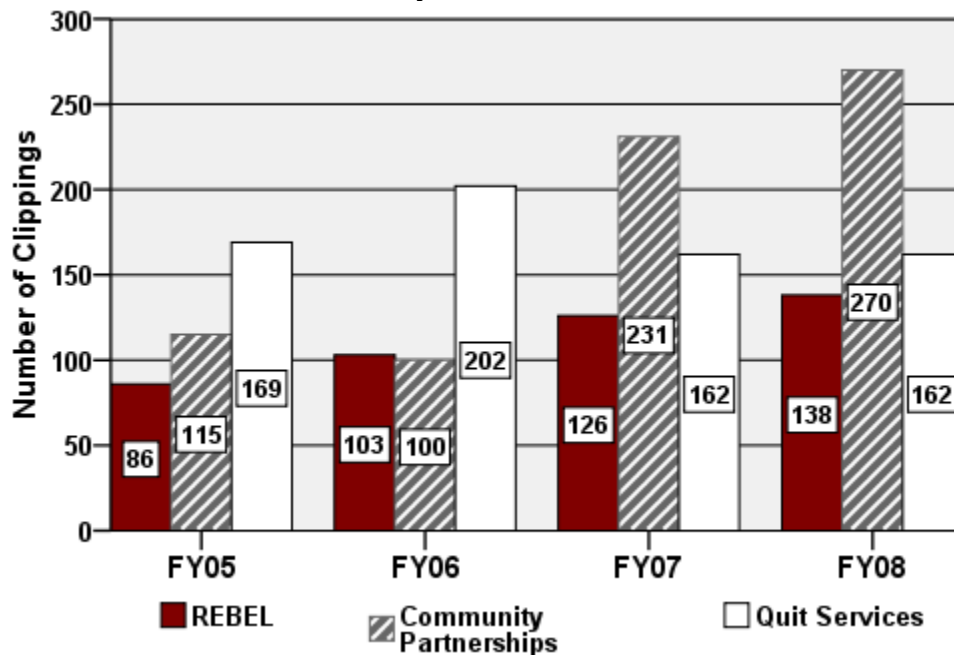


Table 2 presents the number of tobacco-related clippings mentioning each program by type of clipping. The majority of articles mentioning each program type were news/feature articles, although about 30% of articles

mentioning a Community Partnership and almost 40% of articles mentioning a NJ Quit Service were listings/announcement clippings.

Table 2: Number of Tobacco-Related Clippings Mentioning Each Program, by Type of Article

	News/ Feature	Letter to Editor	Editorial	Listing/ Announcement	Cartoon/ Photo-Only	Totals
REBEL	299 (66.0%)	27 (6.0%)	16 (3.5%)	58 (12.8%)	53 (11.7%)	453 (100%)
Community Partnerships	383 (53.5%)	67 (9.4%)	19 (2.7%)	214 (29.9%)	33 (4.6%)	716 (100%)
Quit Services	331(47.6%)	35 (5.0%)	51 (7.3%)	273 (39.3%)	5 (0.7%)	695 (100%)

News/feature articles have been used to introduce and describe CTCP programs and their services, and to report on their recent events, milestones and activities (e.g., a REBEL sponsored park cleanup of cigarette butts). As shown in Table 3, between 71 and 76 news/feature articles mentioned each CTCP program type in FY 2008, though these numbers were less than those in FY 2005.

Table 3: Number of News/Feature Articles Mentioning each Program, by Fiscal Year

	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08	Totals
REBEL	94	73	56	76	299
Community Partnerships	142	110	60	71	383
Quit Services	103	78	79	71	331

The number of letters-to-the editor mentioning each program type is also significant as these represent a channel for CTCP program members, as well as the public, to voice their opinion about these programs. Table 4 presents the number of *unique* letters-to-the-editor (i.e., not counting duplicates of the same letter) mentioning each program/service by fiscal year. These letters-to-the-editor were submitted by Community Partnership coordinators and members, REBEL youth coordinators and REBEL students, members of other health-related organizations, and private citizens. In FY 2008, there were fewer numbers of unique letters mentioning each program than in almost all prior years.

Table 4: Number of Unique Letters-to-the-Editor Mentioning each Program, by Fiscal Year

	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08	Totals
REBEL	6	12	5	2	25
Community Partnerships	21	6	11	6	44
Quit Services	9	8	4	2	23

Clippings mentioning a CTCP program were also coded for whether they included contact information (such as a phone number or website) for reaching the organizations. Of the articles mentioning REBEL, 24.1% included contact information, while 54% of articles mentioning a Community Partnership and 78.1% mentioning a NJ Quit service included contact information for reaching these respective groups/services.

Finally, we also coded for the number of news clippings that mentioned the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services as well as the NJ Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program by name. Across all four fiscal years, 840 total tobacco-related clippings from NJ newspapers named the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (representing 5.3% of all tobacco-related clippings in that time period) and 104 total clippings referred to the NJ Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) (representing 0.6% of all tobacco-related clippings in that time period).

Discussion

Overall, tobacco-related issues continue to receive a substantial amount of attention in New Jersey newspapers (contributing to over 3400 clippings per year in the last four fiscal years), thus demonstrating that tobacco remains a “newsworthy” topic. This is important as media coverage of issues can shape people’s perceptions about the importance of those issues, a phenomena referred to in communication literature as “agenda setting” (NCI, 2008).

Furthermore, New Jersey newspapers, particularly weekly papers with a more local focus, have been used to promote and educate about tobacco cessation, prevention and community programs sponsored by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services. However, while the number of total tobacco-related clippings has increased between Fiscal Years 2005 and 2008, the number of total clippings mentioning two of three sponsored CTCP programs declined, which may in part reflect declines in funding for these programs. In addition, participating agencies in CTCP programs were often referred to in tobacco clippings by their individual agency names (e.g., Atlantic Prevention Resources, UMDNJ Tobacco Dependence Clinic) rather than by the overarching CTCP program name (e.g, Community Partnership for a Tobacco-Free NJ, NJ Quitcenter). This, in addition to CTCP program name changes (i.e., change of name from Communities against Tobacco to Community Partnerships) may detract from the public’s understanding that these services were connected and sponsored by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services’ Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program.

Nevertheless, media coverage of these CTCP programs and services may facilitate participation and should be encouraged. Both staff (e.g., coordinators, directors, clinicians) and members/recipients (e.g., REBEL students, Quitcenter patients) of these programs themselves can help generate coverage by sending stories, pictures and letters-to-the editor to NJ newspapers.

References

National Cancer Institute (2008). The role of the media in promoting and reducing tobacco use. Tobacco Control Monograph No. 19. Bethesda, MD: US Dept. of Health and Human Services, NIH publication no. 07-6242.

More information

The data in this brief are based on a broad content analysis of 15,870 total clippings from New Jersey newspapers collected between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2008 that related to tobacco (i.e., mentioned the words smoking/tobacco). The clippings were tracked and provided by Garden State Press Clipping Bureau and then coded by the UMDNJ School of Public Health for the presence of particular variables of interest, including mention of programs and services sponsored by the NJ Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program: REBEL; NJ Quitnet/Quitline/Quit Centers; and Community Partnerships for a Tobacco-Free NJ. All numbers in the results presented here include duplicates of clippings (i.e., the same story as written by a particular author appearing in multiple papers) unless otherwise noted. All results presented related to Community Partnerships for a Tobacco-Free NJ are inclusive of references to Communities Against Tobacco, as the program was previously known.

The results are limited by use of multiple individuals coding the clippings over time, which may have impacted consistency and accuracy in coding. It should be noted that the number of clippings mentioning Community Partnerships and Quitcenters may have been greater than that presented here, as clippings often referred to individual agency names rather than "NJ Quitcenters" or "Community Partnerships", and participating agencies themselves changed over time, and thus may have at times been missed or left out during coding.

For more information on the data reported in this brief, contact the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services at 609-292-9194, or visit their website at: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/as/ctcp>.

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