



Local partnerships promoting wellness
by addressing substance abuse statewide.

January 28, 2014

Good Morning Senator Gerratana, Senator Bye, Representative Johnson, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Public Health and Appropriations Committees. I am Bonnie Smith, the Executive Director of ERASE and immediate past President of the CT Prevention Network, the organization of Connecticut’s 13 Regional Action Councils for substance abuse prevention and behavioral wellness. On behalf of the Connecticut Prevention Network, I am here to ask for your support of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board’s recommendations for disbursement for the STEP-State-Wide Tobacco Education Program.

STEP was designed to be an innovative and interactive program which includes five one-hour sessions implemented in a variety of settings including summer camps, positive youth development programs, and traditional classroom locations. The five sessions include: health information regarding tobacco, environmental effects of tobacco use, the media’s portrayal of tobacco, costs and choices, and dealing with peer pressure. STEP was funded state-wide from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund from 2011-2013. In that time over 1,360 youth ages 7-16. Our evaluation shows favorable outcomes after participation in the 5,1-hour sessions. A table with more specific evaluation data are below:

**Preliminary Results for STEP Participants, 8 and 9 years old, 131 matched pairs,
As of Oct 2013**

Question		Pre (n=131)			Post (n=131)		
	% Change	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Smoking is risky	+6%	94%	0	6%	100%	0	0
Cigarettes have chemicals	+38%	60%	8%	31%	98%	1%	2%
Second hand smoke... can hurt you	+26%	56%	31%	14%	82%	11%	7%
Advertising... makes kids want to smoke	+20%	27%	45%	24%	47%	22%	30%
Play sport... smoking will affect...	+28%	52%	21%	26%	80%	16%	4%
Easy to quit	+16%*	19%	66%*	13%	12%	82%*	6%
Smoking is expensive	+33%	47%	32%	11%	80%	5%	15%



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An expert from the evaluation report regarding the variety of settings STEP was implemented within:

In general, the kids in the outdoor programs started out with less knowledge but improved more, especially compared to the kids in the sessions that were held in classrooms. The kids in the variety of multi-purpose indoor settings tended to be in-between. One conclusion looks clear: that the STEP program appears to convey benefits in all settings, and perhaps especially outdoors.

For 2014-2016 The CT Prevention Network has requested **\$229,384** be disbursed to ERASE, which would continue to serve as the program manager and fiduciary for STEP. These funds would enable the Regional Action Councils serve an estimated 3,000 youth ages 5-9 between 2014-2016.

The programs RACs have partnered with for STEP, such as camps, after school programs, library programs and boys and girls clubs have continued to request that STEP be implemented in future years. They report that the program is easy to integrate into their settings, takes an interactive approach to teach youth valuable lessons, and that youth request future participation. A 3rd Grade teacher in Thompson stated, "I have never seen the topic of tobacco taught in such a way that the students were excited for the next lesson. We will most definitely want the program again next year!" Stephanie Spargo, who presented at the local library as a summer camp stated, "Students enjoyed the program and parents, I just met, were staying to volunteer all four weeks." Additionally, many schools are interested in having STEP's innovative approach to activity-based learning infused into their current health curricula. In some cases teachers have asked to be trained in the curricula.

Thank all for your time and consideration of our request to support tobacco prevention education in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bonnie Smith', written in a cursive style.

Bonnie Smith, MPH, CPH Vice President
Connecticut Prevention Network

Executive Direction, ERASE (East of the River Action for Substance-Abuse Elimination, Inc.)

