



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RAISES THE BAR FOR TOBACCO CONTROL

Hawaii is making steady progress in reducing tobacco use. Our state has the third lowest smoking prevalence for adults in the country. Between 2000 and 2003, students' smoking rates decreased 60% in middle school and almost 40% in high school. Hawaii's excise tax on tobacco is one of the 10 highest in the country. Every county in the state has passed clean indoor air legislation and new cessation services are now available to tobacco users. However, not all population groups experience these successes. It's time to raise the bar toward greater health goals and a vision for a healthier Hawaii.

Today the State Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Education Program sponsored a conference entitled *Raising the Bar: The Challenge of Health and Tobacco Control in Hawai'i*. The conference, held at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel, discusses why Hawaii wants to set higher and more challenging goals in reaching disparate populations and learn from international and national models.

"Hawaii's successes in tobacco control are definitely noteworthy. However, we need to pay special attention to groups that have been disproportionately affected by tobacco," said Deputy Director of Health Resources Administration Linda Rosen, M.D. "This conference teaches us who these groups are and provides new information on how to reach them."

Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr. presented welcoming remarks to health professionals, school prevention specialists, state legislators, educators, parents, and students, who like him, are concerned about the effects of tobacco in Hawaii.

(more)

Guest speaker, Shane Kawenata Bradbrook, Director of Maori Smokefree Coalition, described a tobacco control intervention specifically designed to reach indigenous peoples that was successfully implemented in Wellington, New Zealand. Robert Robinson, DrPH., of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, spoke about populations disproportionately affected by tobacco. DOH's new Kauai District Health Officer, Dileep Bal, MD, recruited from the California Department of Health Services, discussed the tobacco industries' promotional efforts to describe cigarettes with lower tar and nicotine as less harmful. In addition, presentations were made on various tobacco-related issues including youth empowerment, cessation, secondhand smoke, and reaching disparate populations.

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