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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES RECORD DROP IN CHICAGO YOUTH SMOKING RATES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Reports More than 20 Percent Decrease in Youth Smoking Following City Strategies Aimed at Curtailing Youth Smoking

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Commissioner Bechara Choucair and officials from the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced smoking among Chicago high school students has decreased by more than 20 percent since 2011 and is now the lowest recorded rate in youth smoking. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), less than 11 percent of Chicago high school students reported smoking in 2013, down from more than 13 percent in 2011. This is also a nearly 60 percent decrease from 2001, when roughly a quarter of youth reported smoking.

"We must encourage our young people to make smart choices, so they will live long, healthy lives," said Mayor Emanuel. "From regulating e-cigarettes to banning the sale of flavored tobacco near our schools, the city will employ every possible strategy to curtail young people from smoking."

Mayor Emanuel has pursued a broad range of innovative strategies to keep tobacco out of the hands of children as 90 percent of adult smokers start smoking before their 18th birthday. Every day, more than 3,200 kids will smoke their first cigarette in the United States. If the current rate continues, 5.6 million American youth will die prematurely because of smoking.

In 2011, he launched with CDPH the "Healthy Chicago" plan, which prioritized reducing the use of tobacco products. Earlier this year, the Emanuel Administration teamed with Aldermen Burke and Burns to pass an ordinance that requires e-cigarettes to be kept behind the counter in stores, out of the reach of kids. Retailers will be required to have a tobacco license and the use of e-cigarettes will not be allowed in public places where cigarette smoking is not allowed.

The Administration also joined with Aldermen Thompson and Mitts to pass a prohibition on the sale of flavored tobacco products within a 500 foot radius of schools. In the 2014 budget, he championed a 50-cent per pack cigarette tax increase in Chicago because research shows kids are the most price-sensitive consumers and increasing the price of tobacco is the single most effective way to keep kids from picking up the habit in the first place.

“The actions of Mayor Emanuel and his team, along with kids and their parents in Chicago are fighting tobacco, saving lives, preventing disability and reducing health care costs,” said CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H..

Studies have shown that e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco are disproportionately used by youth. According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, use of e-cigarettes among middle and high school students doubled from 2011 to 2012. Moreover, e-cigarette users often smoke conventional cigarettes – 76.5% of e-cigarette users also smoke conventional cigarettes. There is also substantial evidence that flavored tobacco products are “starter” products for youth who begin smoking. In fact, kids ages 12 to 17 smoke flavored tobacco at a higher rate than any other age group. “Under the Mayor’s leadership, Chicago has become a national leader in the fight against Big Tobacco,” said CDPH Commissioner Bechara Choucair, M.D. “These numbers prove our hard work is paying off as more youth are choosing to live tobacco-free lives.”

Adult smoking rates have also seen an encouraging decline. The most recent data from the Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) reveal 18 percent of Chicago adults report being current tobacco smokers, the lowest number in that survey’s history. Significant declines have been seen among women, college graduates and residents between the ages of 45 and 64.

Mayor Emanuel has a long history of working to address smoking and the associated health risks, having worked on these critical issues as a U.S. Congressman and as Chief of Staff to President Barack Obama. In 2009, Mayor Emanuel worked with President Obama to bring together the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, granting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulatory control of tobacco products. This legislation gave the federal government authority over the manufacture of tobacco products, while leaving local governments with authority over other issues related to these matters.

CDPH also reports an increase in the number of calls to the Illinois Tobacco Quit Line from Chicago, indicating increased interest in the cessation program. More than 24,000 calls were reported from Chicago in 2013. During the last six months of the year, there were 14,000 calls from Chicago to the Quitline, double the number of calls reported in the last six months of 2012. This increase in calls coincided with multiple public education campaigns by CDPH around the dangers of tobacco and menthol, directing residents to call the Quitline at 1-866-Quit-Yes.

For more information on Healthy Chicago and tobacco prevention and control in Chicago, visit www.CityofChicago.org/HEALTH.

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