



GROWING SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO-FREE OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS

October 7, 2020 – Over the last few years, there has been growing support of tobacco-free outdoor recreation areas to promote and protect health and the environment in local communities. Tobacco-free parks and beaches provide individuals, families, and children a healthy environment where they are able to remain socially distant during COVID-19 and not be exposed to the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

In outdoor environments where tobacco is acceptable, children, those with special health needs, older individuals, and pregnant women are vulnerable to the health risks caused by secondhand smoke exposure. Cigarette and spit tobacco litter are also poisonous to children and wildlife. Studies showing that discarded cigarette butts are the most common form of litter, are toxic, slow to decompose, and expensive to remove.

District Health Department #10 has implemented over 100 tobacco and substance-free outdoor recreation areas in our communities. These recreational areas demonstrate a healthy, tobacco-free community norm for community members, especially youth.

Allowing tobacco use in parks, on beaches, and in other recreation areas where youth and families with young children gather sends a dangerous, mixed message around healthy living. Research shows that signed and designated tobacco-free outdoor recreation areas can help prevent or reduce youth tobacco use. “A critical component in reducing youth tobacco use and use of electronic nicotine devices is to create an environment where the use of these products is not considered the norm,” said Christy Rivette, Community Health Supervisor for District Health Department #10.

For information about how to advocate in your community for tobacco-free outdoor recreation areas and to access a toolkit of resources, visit:

<https://www.livewell4health.org/manistee-tobacco-free-parks>.

For information about help with quitting tobacco use visit:

<https://www.livewell4health.org/tobacco-cessation>

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