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Public Opinion Survey Indicates Support for State Smoke-Free Air Law

Howell, Michigan (July 22, 2010) Researchers with the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) Tobacco Section recently completed analysis of results from a public opinion survey related to Michigan's statewide smoke-free air law. The survey was conducted prior to the May 1, 2010 implementation date of the law, which requires Michigan workplaces to be smoke-free.

The nine question survey assessed knowledge about secondhand smoke, knowledge of the law, support for the law, and behavior change related to the law, specifically whether participants would eat out more often if smoking was prohibited in bars and restaurants. Demographic information was also collected. The survey, which was distributed to clients receiving services at local health departments in 80 of Michigan's 83 counties and through 8 agencies serving populations disparately affected by tobacco use, was conducted between March 1 and April 23, 2010 and included 10,030 participants. Livingston County Department of Public Health (LCDPH) was one of the participating agencies.

Statewide just over 75% of all participants were in favor of the law and 88% thought that secondhand smoke was a serious health threat to nonsmokers. Nonsmokers were significantly more supportive of the law than smokers. 87% of participants were aware that all bars and restaurants would be smoke-free starting May 1, 2010. Overall, 89.5 % of those surveyed reported that they would go out to eat more often or no change if smoking was prohibited in restaurants and bars.

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Jennifer Lavelle, Health Education Supervisor, noted that the results from LCDPH were similar to statewide findings. “63% of participants were in favor of the law and 79% thought that secondhand smoke was a serious threat to nonsmokers.”

“The results of the survey indicate strong support for the smoke-free law prior to implementation, and 82% of participants indicated they would go out to eat more often or just as often as they did prior to Michigan being smoke-free,” added Lavelle.

The public opinion survey will be conducted again in August of 2010 and results of the pre- and post-law implementation surveys will be compared. Wilson noted that because the survey utilizes convenience sample methodology the August survey will be distributed within the same venues, but not necessarily completed by the same participants. According to Lavelle, “the implementation of the state smoke-free air law has been relatively smooth. We’ve received very few complaints so far, and businesses are complying with the requirements of the law.”

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