



County of Onondaga  
Office of the County Executive

J. Ryan McMahon II  
County Executive

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**Media Release**

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## **County Executive Ryan McMahon Announces County Health Department Receives Grant Funding for Tobacco Prevention**

*Onondaga County Health Department to receive \$2,000,000*

**SYRACUSE, N.Y.** – County Executive J. Ryan McMahon, II announced that the Onondaga County Health Department has been awarded \$2,000,000 over five years to support the prevention and reduction of tobacco use through strategic youth action and community engagement efforts, in Onondaga, Oswego, and Cayuga counties. The funding, “Advancing Tobacco-Free Communities”, was awarded by the Tobacco Control Program within the New York State Department of Health.

County Executive McMahon said, “There is a direct correlation between tobacco use and poverty in our community. This also impacts the most vulnerable individuals in our community, including the children and others who are being exposed to secondhand smoke.” McMahon continued, “With this new funding, the Onondaga County Health Department will use community-based strategies to mobilize and educate residents and policy makers in our three-county region.”

Smoking rates among adults in Onondaga (18%), Cayuga (21.9%) and Oswego (30.5%) counties are higher than the statewide rate of 14.5% indicating there is a need for a concentrated effort in this region.

Onondaga County Health Commissioner Dr. Indu Gupta explains, “Tobacco is one of the leading causes of illness and death nationwide. Each year, almost half a million Americans die prematurely of smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and every day about 2,000 youth under age 18 in America smoke their first cigarette.” Gupta continued, “Most importantly, we

need to eliminate the health inequities related to tobacco use in Central New York. The people most negatively impacted by tobacco use are those who are experiencing poverty, mental illness, substance use disorders, or physical disabilities. This funding will allow us to work collaboratively across counties to address this inequity with the effective response it deserves.”

With this funding, the Advancing Tobacco-Free Communities initiative will:

- Organize a formal coalition or network of community members and organizations.
- Engage and mobilize community members to strengthen tobacco-related policies that prevent and reduce tobacco use, reduce youth exposure to harmful tobacco marketing in retail settings, limit tobacco industry manipulation of the retail environment, limit exposure to secondhand smoke, and reduce smoking imagery through the media.
- Engage youth ages 13-18 in action-oriented activities and impart the necessary leadership skills to engage in policy-related tobacco control work.

The strategies will reduce the impact of retail tobacco marketing on youth and adults, especially those disparately-affected populations; increase tobacco-free outdoor areas; reduce secondhand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing; reduce tobacco imagery in youth-rated movies; and advance tobacco-free norms.

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