

**TOBACCO INDUSTRY GETS HAMMERED BY TEENS:  
TIGHT IN THE SECOND THREE YEARS, 1998 - 2001**

**Tobacco Prevention Project  
Community Wellness and Prevention Program  
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## BACKGROUND

In 1996, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and the Conference of Mayors declared that creating a generation of "tobacco-free" youth was a regional public health priority. The Board asked the County's Tobacco Prevention Coalition to develop a model ordinance to reduce the impact of advertising on youth and decrease youth access to tobacco. In response, the Youth Task Group, an ad hoc group of the Tobacco Prevention Coalition, and the Tobacco Prevention Project (TPP) (Contra Costa's local lead agency), jointly developed a document entitled *Tobacco-Free Youth: Assessing Policy Options Which Reduce Demand for and Supply of Tobacco to Young People in Contra Costa County*. A model Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance (TFYO) was developed based on the policy paper.

A youth mobilization project - named TIGHT (Tobacco Industry Gets Hammered by Teens) by the youth - was created to provide a vehicle for youth involvement in this policy work. Perhaps the most innovative aspect of the project was TPP's commitment to a participatory project model in which power would be shared with youth. A full-time adult Youth Mobilization Coordinator ensured that young people would sit at the table as full partners with a meaningful voice in the decision-making, agenda-setting, and policy development processes. Youth were trained in leadership development skills, strategic planning, and community organizing; and adult staff and coalition members were supported to work with youth on an equal basis, giving young people a meaningful voice within a highly bureaucratic organizational structure.

TIGHT uses a youth development approach found to be both powerful and effective in the resilience research literature - the interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, developmental studies of youth growing up in adverse environments that document how most of these youth become healthy and successful despite trauma and adversity<sup>1</sup>. TIGHT has demonstrated firsthand that young people who are adequately trained and supported by caring adults are uniquely qualified to identify, address and change conditions in their communities that affect their health and lives<sup>2</sup>.

In late 1998, after two years of intensive community education and organizing work by TIGHT and the Tobacco Prevention Coalition (TPC), the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors adopted one of the most comprehensive tobacco control ordinances in the country. The Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance (TFYO) bans self-service displays and the sale, distribution or promotion of tobacco gear, bans outdoor tobacco

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<sup>1</sup> Masten, A. and Coatsworth, J. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. *American Psychologist*, 53, 205-220; Benard, B. (1991). *Fostering resilience in kids: Protective factors in the family, school, and community*. San Francisco: WestEd.

<sup>2</sup> Hart, R.A. and Schwab, M. (1997). Children's rights and the building of democracy: A dialogue on the international movement for children's participation. *SocialJustice*, 24, 33-63.

advertising within 1,600 feet of schools and public playgrounds<sup>3</sup>, and requires non-complying merchants to be licensed. TIGHT youth then went on to organize at the local level advocating for passage of a similar ordinance by cities. By June 2001, 17 out of 19 cities had adopted a Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance, covering 94% of the county's population (about 930,100 residents). In addition to their countywide organizing work to get Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinances (TFYO) passed, regional TIGHT groups identified and worked on various tobacco problems specific to their own communities. Central County TIGHT youth focused on advertising in neighborhood convenience stores; East County youth focused on advertising and youth access to tobacco in low-income neighborhoods; and West County youth concentrated on billboard advertising.

A previous case study documented the local, regional and countywide organizing and advocacy work of TIGHT youth through August 1998<sup>4</sup>. This supplement picks up where the first left off, and examines the successes, challenges and lessons learned since then.

### **OVERVIEW OF TIGHT WORK: AUGUST, 1998 – JUNE, 2001**

During the first year of the reporting period, TIGHT efforts focused exclusively on advocating for the passage and implementation of the Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance within the county and its cities. TIGHT youth attended nearly 25 meetings of the Board of Supervisors and city council meetings and conducted numerous community-walkarounds to document the tobacco industry presence in communities considering the ordinance. The TFYO was adopted in December 1998 at the county level, a clear victory for the TIGHT youth who spent nearly two years advocating for its passage. By June 1999, seven cities had adopted the ordinance, largely as the result of TIGHT's work.

In the second year, TPP and TIGHT efforts continued to center on the ordinance in most areas of the County, but a decision was made to limit in-depth TIGHT teambuilding efforts to underserved areas that had a history with TIGHT. Those communities included Bay Point, Pittsburg, Martinez, Concord and Richmond. This decision was made in response to concerns that the demands inherent in passing the ordinance were overwhelming TIGHT programming and undermining fundamental principals and practices of youth development. South County TIGHT had been successful in advocating for the TFYO in most of South County cities, and

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<sup>3</sup> Placing restrictions on outdoor advertising within a certain distance from schools and playgrounds in Massachusetts was found to be unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2001. At the time of this printing, the impact of this on Contra Costa County's ordinance has yet to be determined.

<sup>4</sup> Diane F. Reed, T.I.G.H.T.: A case study of a youth-driven, participatory model involving youth in the development and passage of local tobacco policy. Submitted to the Contra Costa County Tobacco Prevention Project, August 7, 1998. This case study was made possible by funds received from the Tobacco Tax Health Protection Act of 1988—Proposition 99, under Grant Number 89-97896 with the California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section.

an adult advocate there was prepared to provide support to the group through a TUPE grant. Efforts were made within the county-wide Tobacco Prevention Coalition (TPC) to increase youth participation and several youth stepped forward to assume leadership roles with the TPC, but their participation was limited due to meeting times and scheduling conflicts (i.e. jobs). Between July 1999 and June 2000, seven cities adopted the ordinance.

By the third year, work continued on the ordinance in pockets of the county, but staff turnover and developments with the Bay Point group resulted in TIGHT being fully operational only in Concord/Clayton Valley for the entire year. By June 30, 2001, all but two of the cities in Contra Costa County had passed the TFYO. TIGHT had been instrumental in these efforts, and then went on in some communities to advocate for full enforcement. Input from TIGHT convinced the coalition to work on obtaining master settlement agreement (MSA) dollars as a priority, and TIGHT youth participated in several advocacy activities related to the MSA but lost interest when their efforts were unsuccessful. TPP and TIGHT staff spent much of the third year planning for a restructuring of the program which will occur in FY's 2001-2004 with support from the CDHS Tobacco Control Section's Advanced Youth Coalitions funding award.

The activities of TIGHT groups throughout the county over the past three years are summarized by area:

#### EAST COUNTY

**Bay Point:** Bay Point TIGHT, renamed "East County Youth Connection (ECYC)" by the youth, was active in getting the Board of Supervisors to adopt the Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance, educating merchants in this unincorporated area about the ordinance and working with the coalition on MSA advocacy efforts. Additionally, ECYC took on a number of other issues including a campaign to establish a high school in the community and a grant application for funds to beautify the area. ECYC youth led clean up days, food drives, and regularly planned outings and dances. During the summer of 2000, the youth decided to separate ECYC from the health department and maintained its weekly meeting schedule and regular outings with help from a former TIGHT coordinator.

**Pittsburg:** Pittsburg TIGHT worked on both the passage and enforcement of the TFYO between July, 1998 and June, 2000. Staff changes deterred on-going work in Pittsburg beyond June, 2000.

#### CENTRAL COUNTY

**Concord:** Engaging Concord youth was an ongoing challenge until TPP and the TIGHT coordinator settled on Clayton Valley High School (CVHS) in a suburb of Concord, as the site of TIGHT efforts. During the second and third years, the TIGHT coordinator built a strong TIGHT club in this high school. Efforts at CVHS

were instrumental in getting the TFYO adopted in the cities of Clayton and Concord. Plans were also drafted to paint an anti-tobacco mural at the school, which is due to be completed in the fall of 2001.

**Martinez:** Efforts to establish a TIGHT club ended after it was clear that there was more interest among students and more support among staff at Clayton Valley High School. The TIGHT coordinator successfully organized youth to advocate for passage of the TFYO here, and continued to do special presentations for students at the high school in Martinez.

**Lamorinda:** TPP and TIGHT staff made a decision to forego establishing TIGHT clubs in the cities of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda due to the high level of services and resources available to the relatively affluent youth who reside there. The East County TIGHT coordinator did, however, make himself available to the three local youth councils for educational presentations and worked with their members to advocate for passage of the TFYO in the three jurisdictions.

#### **WEST COUNTY**

Staffing West County TIGHT was an ongoing challenge that was never successfully met. Two TIGHT coordinators were hired, but neither completed his/her training period at TIGHT for personal reasons. TIGHT youth that had been active in working on the TFYO at the county level were available to successfully advocate for its passage in two West County cities.

#### **SOUTH COUNTY**

TPP and TIGHT staff decided not to establish TIGHT clubs in South County due to the high level of services and resources available to the relatively affluent youth who resides there. The East County TIGHT coordinator made himself available to a school staff person for classroom presentations and worked with students to develop public speaking and advocacy skills to pass the TFYO in two cities.

### **SUCCESSSES**

Over 1,200 ethnically diverse youth throughout the county participated to varying degrees in TIGHT activities from its inception in 1996. During fiscal year 2000-2001, TIGHT reached over 1,700 additional youth<sup>5</sup> through tobacco education presentations and workshops, displays and O2 Van events. TIGHT is based on a fish ladder model developed by Colleen Floyd-Carroll, the first Youth Mobilization Coordinator. This approach encourages youth to take on increasing responsibility, first as volunteers and then moving into outreach worker and youth coordinator positions, until they are ready for other endeavors such as college or higher-level positions.

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<sup>5</sup> TIGHT Service Log 2000-2001, Tobacco Prevention Project.

With the support of adults, TIGHT youth have been involved in:

- researching and documenting the problems of tobacco access and industry targeting in their own communities,
- becoming educated about legal issues regarding tobacco policies,
- generating support from and organizing their peers, schools, and communities on behalf of the ordinance and other local tobacco-related issues,
- talking to the media,
- meeting with members of the County Board of Supervisors and City Councils, and
- testifying at Board of Supervisors and City Council meetings.

### **THE TFYO PASSED**

TIGHT achieved its goal of getting a Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance passed by the Board of Supervisors and then continued to organize for its eventual passage (by June 2001) in 17 of Contra Costa's 19 cities. Beyond this major accomplishment are other overall successes that speak to the commitment to give youth a voice, a place at the table where decisions are made, and support to move on.

### **YOUTH AND ADULTS HAVE LEARNED TO WORK TOGETHER.**

A considerable level of discomfort characterized the early development of TIGHT as adults and youth learned about working with each other. Some members of the Tobacco Prevention Coalition expressed strong reservations about youth involvement, feeling that the young people needed to learn to be more professional. Indeed, to be as effective as possible, youth did need training and tools in researching regional problems, defining the agenda, developing an action plan and deciding how they wanted to work with the project. On the other hand, adults also needed help to support TIGHT youth to sit at the table as equal partners, have visibility and power in the decision making process, and have a meaningful – rather than a tokenized – role.

Over time, youth have proven to be formidable and effective advocates, and adults have come to respect and rely upon their participation. “Youth and adults learned to work together,” said Julie Freestone, TPP Media Coordinator. “They really respected each other, understood that they all had different roles to play. They functioned much more as a team. They got used to working together and it made a difference. The coalition came to see the vital role of youth.”

In fact, the adult coalition recently adopted some of the strategies that proved effective for TIGHT. For example, TIGHT youth made signs to hold up at Board of Supervisors meetings when they realized that the TV cameras were pointed right at the audience. “ Even if they never got to be heard, they could hold up the signs,” said Julie Freestone. “The coalition liked that, and recently when they were trying

to get the Board to give some of the MSA money to tobacco prevention, they used signs too.”

### **PROVIDING DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

The approach used by TIGHT is designed to provide youth’s developmental needs for belonging, respect, autonomy, challenge, contribution and meaning. In a programmatic sense, this means that youth coordinators place strong emphasis on providing caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles in the program. TIGHT sought to involve youth that would not ordinarily participate in this type of project. This meant staff needed to have the ability to respond to the problems and crises of young people living in low income, resource deprived communities and struggling to cope with difficult circumstances that could impact youth's on-going participation. The developmental supports provided by the TIGHT staff covered a wide range of activities, including listening to youth talk about personal issues, transporting youth to appointments, and skill development.

The decision to provide comprehensive developmental supports to a relatively small group of young people proved to be a worthwhile investment, from the public policy changes that were achieved to changes in the youth themselves. “TIGHT had a significant and positive impact on each of the young people who were involved”, said Andrea Dubrow, TIGHT program coordinator. “They had a consistent person who was coming to them, and talking to them, and organizing with them and bringing them food and teaching them things and spending time with them. That was really positive for them.”

The effectiveness of the developmental supports experienced by TIGHT youth was assessed through interviews conducted as part of a research grant from the University of California Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program. Those findings are highlighted below<sup>6</sup>:

- The environmental protective factors identified in the youth development and resiliency literature as important developmental supports are visible and plentiful in TIGHT. *Caring relationships* with adults coordinating the program, with peers and especially with the regional youth coordinators were the most commonly expressed development support experienced by TIGHT youth.
- Youth said that the most significant aspect of TIGHT was having *opportunities for meaningful involvement and participation*. Some stressed the value of being involved in doing something to help their community, and hoped that their work would have an impact. Others described having an especially strong sense of

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<sup>6</sup> Final Progress Report for Youth-Driven Tobacco Policy Change Research Study. Submitted by WestEd and Contra Costa County Tobacco Prevention Program to University of California Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program, February 2001.

ownership of TIGHT, in large part because youth are involved in determining goals and priorities for project work.

- For some youth, the *high expectations* held by the adults working with them was the first time anyone held them accountable for their grades. Others credited TIGHT with helping them to find the discipline and resolve to work hard throughout high school so that they would be able to attend college.
- TIGHT enhanced *resilience traits*, such as social competence, autonomy and sense of self, and sense of meaning and purpose, particularly among young people actively involved in the passage of the Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance. The program provided youth with concrete skills and a heightened sense that they could create change. Actively participating in developing a program that was consistent with their own priorities increased the young people's feelings of autonomy, self-confidence and the ability to speak up for their beliefs. Youth felt that TIGHT gave them a cause to fight for and many felt a deeper sense of meaning and purpose by helping their communities and improving the health status of their peers and friends

Monica Cervantez, youth coordinator, said that the support provided by TIGHT made a definite difference in young people joining and staying involved. "Getting them involved in tobacco took a lot of work," she said. "It was hard because there are so many other competing factors...I felt really good that despite my youth's busy lives, they stayed involved with me. That's a huge success, having them show up at a city council meeting and testify about their own feelings, or write a letter in their own words. Or when you call their house to remind them [about coming to a meeting or hearing] and their parents answer the phone and know the project, or they've heard your name already, or you see parents come along with their kids to a meeting."

"What we call developmental supports were really felt on a personal level by all of the TIGHT staff and youth," concludes Dubrow. "When the youth coordinators had difficult things going on in their personal lives, this was a good place for them to get support and talk about it and vent or get ideas about how to deal with things. And professionally, when I've been to city council meetings and heard the youth coordinators speak, the way they present and conduct themselves – it becomes so clear that they 'got it' and that they learned how to do all these things that the program was trying to teach them to do."

#### **MEMORABLE LOCAL SUCCESSES**

**Bay Point.** The TIGHT youth in Bay Point (an unincorporated town in East County) were very active in the passage of the countywide Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance. Once the Board of Supervisors had adopted the ordinance the youth, on their own, decided to start enforcing it. "We had no idea that they had just gotten



together without the coordinator and had started going into stores and telling merchants about the ordinance,” said Denice Dennis, TPP project manager. “I found myself with two tobacco retailers in my office saying ‘What’s going on? These kids are coming into our stores and ripping our signs down.’ Once we knew what they were doing, we gave them support and helped them go back and do follow-up. TIGHT youth actually brought all the Bay Point stores into compliance!”

Bay Point youth were so empowered that their organizing efforts inspired a group of their parents to establish their own residents council and organize around other issues.

**Pittsburg.** This was another city where TIGHT youth felt a deep sense of ownership. Following passage of the ordinance in Pittsburg in May, 1999, TIGHT youth brought attention to the lack of enforcement, met with the police commander in charge of enforcement, and were successful in attracting media attention. Their efforts resulted in the City of Pittsburg actually budgeting funds to pay youth for their help in enforcing the ordinance.

**Clayton.** The process of getting a Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance passed in Clayton - one of the last cities to adopt the ordinance - demonstrated how important it is for youth to be actively involved in the process. The city council had maintained for a long time that there was no problem with tobacco advertising and availability in Clayton. TIGHT youth from Clayton Valley High School challenged that position, providing evidence of the research they had done in the community. “They were able to stand up and in their own words tell the story about why it was a problem,” said Charlotte Dickson, Policy Coordinator. “They were checkers in the supermarket and they told about how they sold cigarettes to their friends, how the cases in the supermarket were not locked. They told their stories and the city council changed its mind. They not only passed it, but passed one of the toughest ordinances in the county!”

**Concord.** The same group of TIGHT youth from Clayton Valley High School participated in meetings of the Concord City Council for nine months, providing input into the policies that were included in the draft TFYO. Ordinance passage occurred in both cities in close proximity. The group of TIGHT youth that attended Concord’s public hearing on the ordinance and subsequent passage then drove to Clayton to join other TIGHT youth in testifying at the Clayton meeting, described above.

## CHALLENGES

The very nature of the TIGHT project, which gives youth such a strong role, makes TIGHT both controversial and challenging. Major challenges can be grouped under the following categories: 1) institutional; 2) working with young people new to the

workforce; 3) providing developmental supports; 4) sustaining a single issue project; 5) coping with change; and 6) maintaining appropriate levels of capacity building for youth and staff.

### **INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES**

**Culture clash.** The bureaucratic nature of the health department typically involves rigid rules, procedures and hierarchy that are contrary to the flexibility needed to work responsively with young adult staff and youth. Finding creative ways to be responsive to the immediate needs of young people can be an exercise in frustration, particularly around purchasing promotional items and incentives, such as food, that will be appealing to youth, or rail transit tickets. The TIGHT experience challenged the health department to think more about how to work with communities and how to work with non-professional level staff. “More people are changing how they think about organizing and working with youth in an activist way and as partners,” said Andrea Dubrow.

**Job classification barriers.** Trying to incorporate young adult staff that does not meet requirements for civil service lists into a bureaucratic institution like a health department is a major challenge. The youth coordinators lacked the education or work experience that are typically required for employees working in the health department. Even though the work they performed was similar to some of the other employees who had academic degrees, the youth coordinators were not eligible to be classified in a salaried, benefited civil service category, making them feel noticeably different from other employees and creating resentment. “I’ve seen people in the office without the experience that the job calls for, whether it was organizing, working with youth, or mobilizing. But they had a degree and the respect factor is there for people with degrees, even if they don’t have the experience,” said Monica Cervantez, a regional youth coordinator. “That was a big problem with all the youth coordinators because it’s not an easy job.”

“They felt like second-class citizens,” observed Andrea Dubrow, TIGHT project coordinator. “They didn’t have benefits, they were paid an hourly rate while other people here get goodies that they don’t get by virtue of their low level of experience. It gives them a sense of not being valued as others are, of being treated like kids.”

Relatively recently, a separate civil service classification was approved through contract negotiations which did open the door for the regional youth coordinators to have permanent benefited positions.

**Transportation.** The centralized location of the TIGHT office in the health department in Martinez created daunting obstacles at times. The long drive to Martinez from Richmond (15 miles) in West County or Pittsburg and Bay Point (12 miles) in East County, and a poor public transportation system meant that youth coordinators had to have their own transportation. “You can only get certain people.

They have to have a car, they have to have insurance that they can pay for, and they have to have a decent driving record,” said Dubrow. While this was not a problem for some youth coordinators, the transportation challenge was a major issue in filling the West County youth coordinator’s position and keeping that individual on board.

**Working with young people new to the workforce.** TIGHT was first conceived, at least in part, as a youth development program with a job training component, using the fish ladder model of "growing young adults". The original model was to hire young adults, who knew their communities well and who could reach the high-risk youth, as regional coordinators. Most did not have solid work experience. As a part of the fish ladder model, they were mentored as young professionals so that they in turn could support and mentor the outreach workers and youth volunteers.

Working with young people new to the work force means teaching not only the specific content area of the job but accountability, managing paperwork, and documenting work activities. Teaching these basics is time and resource consuming. Because so much of the work took place out of the office in various communities across the county, it was inevitable that the need for accountability would periodically conflict with the need for flexibility. “There were trust and accountability issues,” said Dubrow. “There was a lot of flexibility and freedom when staff were out in the field. The kind of work they do doesn’t show results on a daily basis and it doesn’t always fit into an 8-hour day so there was some tension when they had to account for their time.”

The nature of their jobs as paid TPP staff working in the community with youth sometimes created pressures for the youth coordinators because so much of what they did was difficult to quantify. “Being a youth coordinator was challenging because people expect a lot of things from you and hold you responsible for what the youth actually do or don’t do, what the youth know, the ways that they behave,” said Monica Cervantez.

Eventually, their lack of standing in the workplace translated into youth coordinators not feeling equally valued as employees. “There are times when you wonder is this even appreciated? Do they realize how much work it is and how much talk you have to do and all the red tape you have to go through just to maintain a certain status on a school campus so that you could work there?” said Cervantez. “What we do isn’t the kind of stuff you could write on your resume or job description. It’s not the stuff you get credit for like, what did you do at that school all day? Why were you at the campus so long? In my position, you’re in the middle, you have the youth here and you’re doing all this work but everything you do is not appreciated because [a lot of] your work is not something you can put into words. You can’t re-create that on a monthly report.”

**Providing developmental supports.** The literature on youth development points to the necessity of providing access to services in order to support young peoples' growth. From its inception, TIGHT provided comprehensive support to ensure the on-going participation of challenged young people who live in and around crisis constantly. Youth coordinators addressed personal problems brought to them by the youth, identified resources for them, took them to appointments and to meet with service providers, provided follow-up, and informally counseled them about dealing with their issues. "The youth coordinators did what was needed and worked for their youth based on the resources they had at hand and their personal commitment to making sure young people got what they needed," explained Colleen Floyd-Carroll, TIGHT's first Youth Mobilization Coordinator. "We identified a network of resources and supports to address the issues youth were dealing with and provided advocacy on behalf of and support to the young people."

Providing developmental supports for youth within a categorical program like the county's Tobacco Prevention Project raises questions about boundaries - how far to go, when to stop, when to refer out. The question about how many resources should be devoted to accessing services came up repeatedly during the last three years. "An ongoing, unresolved debate grew within the program", said Charlotte Dickson. "Do we provide case management, or do we simply do information and referral? Is there an in-between 'facilitated referral' that more accurately describes what we are doing when youth come to us with real-life problems?" These questions about resources were exacerbated by the lack of services in many of the targeted communities. "The program was originally conceptualized that TIGHT provide [some sort of] case management," explained Denice Dennis, TPP project manager. "Then a combination of factors led us to understand that we're not case managers, we're really information and referral, and we need to refer youth out to other support and resources. But when none exists, what do you do?"

The significant amount of staff time and resources needed to meet young people's needs was quantified through a research grant from the University of California Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program (TRDRP). "We didn't feel people understood that if you're going to have this kind of youth project what kinds of resources you would need to put into it," said Dennis. "The resources we needed to put into this part of the program were an on-going challenge over the last three years." TRDRP allowed the project to develop tools to define and quantify specific areas of developmental supports:

- 1) *Caring Relationships*, such as:
  - helping youth address potential barriers to their participation;
  - talking about personal, family or academic issues with individual youth;
  - making phone calls or home visits; and
  - providing information.

- 2) *Meaningful Participation*, such as:
- providing TIGHT skills development training; and
  - community service or community involvement opportunities.
- 3) *High Expectations*, such as:
- talent or skills development support;
  - educational field trips and activities; and
  - providing transportation.

Staff documented the developmental supports that were provided to youth and to the young adult coordinators on log forms that were created through the TRDRP grant. This enabled staff to see the number of hours and resources needed to provide this core part of the program to the youth and coordinators who was involved with TIGHT. Log forms were also developed for capturing the amount of time dedicated to Action/Advocacy conducted and Services Provided.

Table 1 was developed as a summary of the completed documentation logs. It shows the number of hours spent in providing developmental supports, action advocacy and services provided during fiscal year 2000-2001. The overall majority, 70% of the 778 total staff hours spent with youth on TIGHT activities, was devoted to providing developmental supports, 23% were spent on action/advocacy activities, and 7% were spent on service activities.

<b>Table 1. TIGHT activities, by category and number of hours, 2000-2001</b>							
<b>Action/Advocacy</b>		<b>Developmental Supports</b>		<b>Service</b>			
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Hours</b>		
Attend workshop	55.25	TIGHT skills development	138.25	Tobacco education presentation/workshop	28.25		
Conduct TIGHT meeting	37.25	Talk about personal, family, academic issues	130.75	TIGHT display	13.00		
Community walk-around	27.00	Fun field trips/activities	118.50	O2 Van event	12.25		
Attend community meeting	21.50	Educational field trips	79.00				
Talk with key community member	14.75	Transportation	32.00				
Present information at meeting	13.25	Community service/Involvement	23.50				
Distribute TIGHT interest cards	8.25	Make phone calls and home visits	15.75				
Collect petition signatures	3.75	Talent/skills development	11.75				
Send letter/postcard	1.25	Provide information and made referrals	10.00				
Conduct workshop	1.00						
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>183.25</b>	<b>Total hours</b>	<b>541.50</b>			<b>Total hours</b>	<b>53.50</b>

Source: Final Progress Report for Youth-Driven Tobacco Policy Change Research Study. Submitted by WestEd and Contra Costa County Tobacco Prevention Program to University of California Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program, February 2001.

**Coping with change.** Within a year or so of passage of the ordinance by the Board of Supervisors, TIGHT had changed from a youth development project involved in changing tobacco policy to a project in which youth played a central role in getting the ordinance adopted in every city. A combination of factors, including choices made by TIGHT staff, turnover of key adult and youth staff, and strained TPP resources contributed to this radical programmatic shift.

“We came to a critical point with TIGHT,” said Freestone, referring to a TIGHT retreat held in mid-1999. “They were being consumed by the ordinance. That’s all they were doing. The other pieces of TIGHT, including youth leadership, training and developmental supports weren’t happening.” TIGHT youth coordinators felt that TPP had lost the original vision for the program as being a youth led, youth driven project. “The youth felt they weren’t getting what they were used to,” said Freestone. “So TPP checked in with the youth – [theoretically] they could have stopped working on the ordinance, the objectives had been met. They tried to reaffirm that the ordinance was a vehicle to get youth to become active, to learn to speak out.” But despite their dissatisfaction with the changes in TIGHT caused by choosing to focus on the TFYO, the TIGHT staff remained committed to getting the ordinance passed in every city throughout the county.

The decision to keep working on the ordinance took a lot of the resources and staff time that had previously gone into providing developmental supports to youth and youth coordinator staff. One very noticeable change was a drop in youth support activities. “We used to take kids to the doctor or to get their driver’s license,” said Monica Cervantez, a youth coordinator. “That’s the support part of our job that started to disappear, which was really sad.” Eventually, the youth coordinators began to feel that youth were being “used”. “It wasn’t a youth-friendly project anymore,” Cervantez said. “And it wasn’t about the kids. It was about the work that they needed the kids to do for the ordinance.” Another unintended consequence of the decision to focus on passing the ordinance was a decrease in capacity building and professional development activities for the youth coordinators themselves.

It was at this retreat that the decision was made to focus TIGHT development in specific areas of the county where TIGHT had support and history: Bay Point, Pittsburg, Martinez, Concord and Richmond. Scarce resources also necessitated reducing the number of hours the TIGHT coordinators were working from 25 to 20 hours per week.

**Sustaining a single-issue project.** Maintaining the integrity of a project identified as “youth driven” or “youth led” - meaning that youth define the issues and set the agenda - can be difficult when a project is constrained by categorical funding that only allows work on a specific issue.

The TIGHT group in Bay Point frequently told TIGHT staff that they wanted to work on other issues they defined as being relevant to them. After the ordinance was passed and implemented in the unincorporated county, Bay Point youth were ready for new challenges. TPP and TIGHT staff held a day and a half-long retreat in April, 2000, to develop a list of possible other tobacco issues for action planning beyond the TFYO. But the list did not inspire the Bay Point TIGHT coordinator or the youth outreach worker – they simply wanted to do other, more compelling things. “We offered them a whole menu of other [tobacco-related] issues and they weren’t interested,” said Julie Freestone, TPP Media Coordinator.

This dilemma about how to honor funding obligations yet support youth to take leadership by setting their own agenda was felt throughout TPP. “You build up a youth leadership core, you make it your philosophy that this is youth-driven,” said Charlotte Dickson, TPP Policy Coordinator. “Then what do you do when they don’t want to work on tobacco anymore?”

The answer to that question may be found in the old organizing maxim, “When the people are ready, the leaders will follow.” When youth are ready for a change, they can be quick to find new areas of interest. Using the same tools and principles they learned from TIGHT, Bay Point youth began to identify other issues about how they wanted to improve their communities for youth. They decided to work on getting a high school so those students wouldn’t have to be bussed to high schools in other cities. “How do you define success?” asked Julie Freestone, TPP Media Coordinator. “They knew how to organize, how to get their points across, where to hit the power system. They wanted a high school, they organized to get a high school...Some people would say we totally accomplished our objective there; others would say it was a failure because youth lost interest in tobacco.”

**Maintaining appropriate levels of capacity building for youth and staff.** As a youth action project, TIGHT youth were trained in leadership development, community-based action research, public speaking, critical thinking, organizing, communication, and teamwork. Professional development and capacity building trainings and conferences supported the young adult staff. This began to diminish as TIGHT resources were concentrated to advocate for TFYO passage in every city.

In the first year alone following passage of TFYO by the Board of Supervisors, eleven out of Contra Costa’s nineteen cities adopted a Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance. The all-consuming nature of the work became apparent: it was not unusual for TIGHT youth and TPP staff to appear at council meetings in two different cities on the same day. In fact, TIGHT staff and youth attended 20 evening City Council meetings from January through June 1999. TPP staff became too stretched to provide many of the capacity building supports that had been an important component of the project in the past. “We did a great job training them in the first round, but we didn’t have a big enough staff to train them *and* keep the

train on the track moving to city council meetings,” said Charlotte Dickson, TPP Policy Coordinator. “We lost the capacity building piece of it to a pretty large extent. The training became more ad hoc, situational, like we’re going to a council meeting, what are we going to say?”

The lack of staff resources took a toll in preparing youth to testify before various city councils, particularly since each city had slightly different issues and needs. “The role of the youth was different in each city in terms of how many youth had to be there and whether TIGHT needed to take the lead in bringing the ordinance before the council,” said Dickson. At times youth were asked difficult questions that they hadn’t been prepared ahead of time to respond to. “They were out in the cities, at community meetings trying to drum up support and people were challenging them. We didn’t do nearly as good a job in preparing them to anticipate this, and of course the youth were feeling very uncomfortable.”

Professional development and capacity building activities for the youth coordinator staff suffered as well. “After those [first] three years, I felt like the project’s commitment to professional development for the youth coordinators wasn’t there,” said Monica Cervantez, youth coordinator. “Sometimes the professional development was a class. And if [the class] didn’t specifically relate to what I was doing right then they would say ‘what does it have to do with this?’ I had to battle to do things. [The more] concerned we got about the tobacco work, the tighter things got as far as being involved in anything that wasn’t tobacco...We had to keep doing the same thing – pass the ordinance from city to city. There wasn’t any room for growth.”

## LESSONS LEARNED

In a supportive and comprehensive context, tobacco prevention activities provide excellent training opportunities for youth in community organizing, assessment, strategy development, and policy change. Some of the major lessons learned are 1) youth do make a difference in changing tobacco policies; 2) working with young people new to the workforce is a challenge; 3)adequate resources must be allocated for this type of work, 4) sustaining a youth development model may eventually conflict with program goals and 5) youth need to identify and work on topics and issues important to them and they need to have fun doing it.

**Youth do make a difference in changing tobacco policies.** The county’s tobacco-free youth ordinance, adopted in late 1998, was supported by a majority of the Board of Supervisors. At least three of the Board members agreed that the youth presence made a difference in the outcomes of the discussions. This has proven to be true in rolling out the ordinance in city after city as well. Many city officials timed hearings on the ordinance to be sure that local youth could be there



to testify. One city insisted that an ordinance was unnecessary until youth provided evidence about problems with tobacco sales and availability, and then the council passed one of the strongest ordinances in the county. Another city refused to move forward until they heard from young people themselves.

**Working with young people new to the workforce is a challenge.** A unique aspect of TIGHT was that youth doing organizing work in their own communities were also working in a highly bureaucratic system, requiring a traditional organization to assume unconventional roles. These included teaching youth a work culture, easing bureaucratic constraints to give them the room they need to mobilize communities, and making the institution responsive to the needs that youth have as new workers. As part of their professional development, young adult staff also need to be guided in the process of developing personal career goals and separating from the job when they have accomplished their goals and are ready to leave.

Andrea Dubrow, TIGHT program coordinator, believes that the demands of the youth coordinator position requires individuals with a higher level of work experience. “I don’t know that they need to have a BA – it was our conclusion that we waive that requirement depending on the individual's work experience,” she said. “On the other hand, I think if you go through college and make it through and graduate, you’ve had some successes and learned to pull things together and you can use those skills in the working world.”

Finding youth coordinators with the ideal balance of work experience and the ability to effectively connect with youth in the targeted communities will be a challenge for any program attempting a project of this nature. “Lower income folks have a harder time getting through college as quickly and those that do may be too distanced from the struggling youth we were initially trying to reach,” said Colleen Floyd-Carroll. “In my experience interviewing 22-year old college grads for the youth coordinator positions, most did not have the ‘edge’ needed to be able to work with youth from the most challenging circumstances in an advocacy/organizing project.”

**Adequate resources must be allocated for this work.** TIGHT requires a full-time senior health education specialist dedicated to advocate for the youth coordinators and the youth. The work also requires that youth organizers and outreach workers be assisted to address issues in their lives (e.g., transportation, family violence, pregnancy, keeping up with schoolwork) that can be potential barriers to their continued work with the project. “I needed an advocate just to have my position, between project management and getting the work done with the youth,” said Monica Cervantez, youth coordinator. On-going education and training for the volunteers and the staff need to be planned into the program.

Youth need to be educated about the issues and receive training in community research, public speaking, critical thinking, grass roots organizing, and working as a team. “They can’t do it alone,” said Charlotte Dickson, TPP Policy Coordinator. “Youth need a lot of support. They’re very compelling, but they can’t answer legal questions and do intense political analysis. We did a lot of work behind the scenes with the city attorneys and individual council members. If you leave youth on their own with no training, it’s a set up for failure.”

**Sustaining a participatory, youth development model may eventually conflict with program goals.** Maintaining a commitment to youth and the integrity of their own process of setting priorities and defining the agenda as opposed to falling into the trap of viewing the young people as a vehicle to accomplish predetermined program goals requires mindfulness. Once the ordinance was passed by the County Board of Supervisors, the campaign moved to individual cities, where it soon became evident that resources did not exist to apply the original youth development model in every city. This created tension that prompted TIGHT and TPP to reexamine and redefine their priorities.

**Youth need to identify and work on topics and issues important to them and they need to have fun.** Long-term youth advocacy efforts may be less successful if youth are only involved in anti-tobacco control activities. Once the Tobacco-Free Youth Ordinance was passed in their communities, TIGHT youth wanted to apply the knowledge and skills they gained as tobacco activists to other health and social issues important to them. This is a sign of successful and positive youth development. “You need to be committed to the youth and recognize if you’re going to keep it vital and exciting for them, you have to respond to other issues,” said Charlotte Dickson, TPP Policy Coordinator. “There needs to be some way to support those relationships and activities,” agreed Monica Cervantez. It is also important that the group have fun together to celebrate and to build cohesion. Movie nights, miniature golf, dances and parties were built into TIGHT throughout the three years.

The TIGHT experience has taught the Tobacco Prevention Project that it is time for its work with youth to evolve to a new level by incorporating youth advocacy and tobacco prevention concepts into existing youth organizations that can work with youth on a number of issues. Partnering with other youth programs that would support cross-categorical efforts has the potential to institutionalize support for youth skill development and youth mobilization to fight the tobacco industry while providing young people with opportunities to also work on other areas that are important to them.

The primary lesson has been that the authentic voices of youth were what policymakers, media, health personnel, community leaders, and program staff needed to hear. The process of creating opportunities for their voices to be heard is

rewarding, yet complicated. “We started this project because we knew we had to pass this ordinance,” said Julie Freestone, TPP Media Coordinator. “We were going to use the clean indoor air model where the constituents did the talking, and because the constituents were youth, we knew we had to involve them. And the lesson learned was that we were right. They *were* the most compelling voice.”