
UC MERCED NICOTINE & CANNABIS POLICY CENTER



OVERVIEW PRESENTATION



WHY START A NICOTINE & CANNABIS POLICY CENTER AT UC MERCED?



NICOTINE & CANNABIS POLICY CENTER
EVIDENCE BASED SOLUTIONS FOR CENTRAL CALIFORNIA



TOBACCO IS STILL AN ISSUE

- ◻ Smoking is still the largest cause of preventable deaths
 - 1 out of 5 deaths are due to smoking
 - 1,300 people die from smoking every day
- ◻ Smoking costs \$300 billion each year
 - Medical care for adults due to smoking-related disease
 - Lost productivity due to disease and death due to SHS
- ◻ Every day, 3,200 youth start smoking
- ◻ 80% of smokers regret smoking
- ◻ 68% want to quit



AT HOME, TOBACCO IS AN ISSUE

- California is an international leader in tobacco control
 - CA led the charge for smoke-free laws and taxation
 - Lowest state-level prevalence
- Despite being in CA, the SJV is lagging behind
 - The state prevalence for adult smoking is 12%
 - SJV-Sierra Foothill rates are 16%-20%
 - On par with traditionally high smoking-states of Alabama and Georgia
 - 60% of rural adolescent males smoked in the past 30 days



WHAT ABOUT CANNABIS?

- ◊ Prop 64 has drastically changed the policy landscape for marijuana
 - Recreational use is legal, but it is still restrictive
 - Do people understand the risks involved with cannabis use?
 - Do people know and/or support cannabis policies and restrictions?
 - What is the intersection between tobacco and cannabis?
 - Will the increase in cannabis use have an impact on tobacco use?

NOTE: THE NCPC IS EXAMINING NICOTINE AND CANNABIS POLICY. IT DOES NOT RESEARCH ANY PLANTS, EXTRACTS OR THEIR PHYSICAL & MENTAL EFFECTS.



IS THERE A CONTROL ISSUE?



Tobacco Control has historically been difficult in the San Joaquin Valley and mountains

- ⬡ A severe lack of infrastructure, uneven policy enforcement, and lack of understanding of, or support for, policy among the population has created lapses in tobacco and cannabis control effectiveness.
- ⬡ SJV localities have not effectively implemented regulations around emerging tobacco control issues, including regulations of nicotine products such as e-cigarettes.
- ⬡ Legalization of marijuana also poses a significant policy enforcement problem in the heavily agricultural area, where cannabis is perceived as a potential cash crop.



WHY IS MORE DATA NEEDED?

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Central California and specifically the San Joaquin Valley (SJV) and mountains have largely been overlooked and underserved

- The SJV contains many ethnically diverse and underserved groups with numerous health problems, including tobacco-related diseases and yet very little data on the region exists.
- More data on whether people support tobacco and cannabis policies will help better direct when policy formation might be advantageous, where lapses in enforcement occur, and how tobacco control measures might best be communicated to the public.
- The SJV has also been prone to non-regional investigators who have attempted to conduct research in the area, only for those efforts to be short-lived, without long-lasting benefits.

UC Merced & NCPC is committed, long-term, to investigating & improving the health of residents in the San Joaquin Valley and mountains.

HOW WILL THE NCPC HELP?

THE NCPC MISSION

THE NCPC WILL CONDUCT NICOTINE AND CANNABIS POLICY RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATE AND TRANSLATE THE RESULTS TO SUPPORT TOBACCO AND CANNABIS CONTROL EFFORTS, AND REDUCE TOBACCO-RELATED DISEASES AND DEATH FOR THE SJV REGION.

Aim 1: To establish grassroots support for tobacco and cannabis control, including point of sales, smoke-free indoor air, vaping, and recreational cannabis retailer regulations.

Aim 2: Monitor tobacco and cannabis control policy efforts in the region, document challenges to enforcing those policies, and identify emergent policy issues.

Aim 3 Support both short and long-term research projects that will inform tobacco and cannabis control policy at the local and state levels.

Aim 4. Establish a visible and stable presence for tobacco and cannabis control policy research and coordination in the San Joaquin Valley.



WHICH COUNTIES ARE INCLUDED?

THE NCPC CATCHMENT AREA

- The NCPC will be based in Merced but the research will be carried out in **11 counties** across the San Joaquin Valley. These counties include:

**San Joaquin / Calaveras / Stanislaus / Tuolumne /
Merced / Mariposa / Madera / Fresno / Kings /
Tulare / Kern**

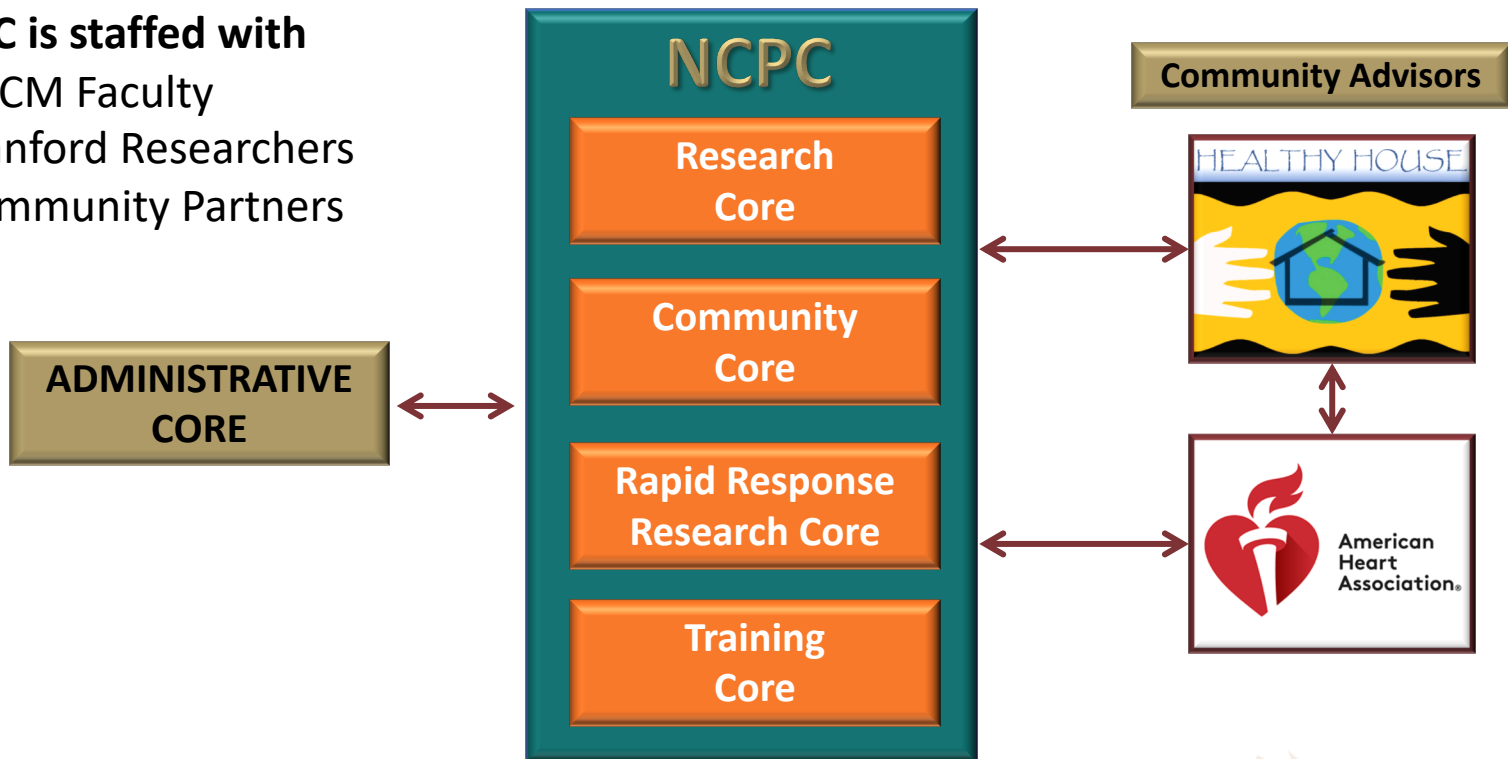
- The 11 counties are home to over 4 million people, the region includes some of the poorest counties and populations in California.
- With a state-level smoking prevalence rates reaching 12% in 2016, the disparities in tobacco control implementation in California have resulted in adult smoking prevalence rates of 16% in the SJV, with rates reaching 19% in Fresno and 20% in Tuolumne, Calaveras, and Mariposa.



HOW IS THE NCPC STRUCTURED?

THE NCPC HAS FIVE KEY CORES

- The NCPC is staffed with
- 10 UCM Faculty
 - 3 Stanford Researchers
 - 2 Community Partners



MAIN RESEARCH CORE



The research project, “Understanding and Empowering Tobacco Control the San Joaquin Valley” will be the foundational research project of the NCPC

- ⬡ The project will address two main gaps in tobacco and cannabis control efforts in the region:
 - 1) The lack of data on public knowledge, support, and adherence to policies
 - 2) Under-utilization of youth advocacy in tobacco and cannabis control in the SJV

1 LOCAL DATA IS CRUCIAL TOBACCO AND CANNABIS CONTROL

- ⬡ There is very little data on the SJV
- ⬡ Large epidemiological data have not been able to capture the SJV and mountain areas
- ⬡ We have no data to understand what the public knows and thinks about tobacco, marijuana, and policies
- ⬡ Tobacco and marijuana impact youth, but much of the work has been to affect youth, not work with youth

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2 INVOLVING YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN UNDERSERVED REGIONS IS KEY TO BUILDING TOBACCO AND CANNABIS CONTROL MOVEMENTS THE SJV

- ⬡ **Youth are effective agents of change**, and are important to policy formation and implementation
- ⬡ **SJV youth are ethnically diverse**, and there are large emerging cohorts of adolescents and young adults in the 11-county region
- ⬡ **Positive Youth Development (PYD)** methods have been shown to be an effective mechanism for empowering youth

MAIN RESEARCH CORE



The Research project focuses on providing the necessary data on enforcement and implementation of tobacco control policies in the SJV, and devising culturally-tailored strategies to increase youth involvement in tobacco and cannabis policy advocacy.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

- Conduct interviews and focus groups around the region
- Conduct mass-scale community surveys to understand public knowledge and attitudes towards tobacco and cannabis
- Implement a youth-empowerment curriculum to train youth ambassadors to be agents of policy change and advocate for their communities



RURAL RAPID RESPONSE CORE



THE RRRG WILL DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PLANS TO ANSWER SPECIFIC POLICY ISSUES FACED BY SJV AGENCIES & PUBLIC HEALTH DEPTS

The RRRG is charged with addressing emerging policy issues in the SJV and Sierra Foothills

- Engage with Public Health Departments in the San Joaquin Valley, Mountain Counties, and other rural counties in California.
- Conduct Quick-Strike studies that will help inform policy in a timely fashion
- Help disseminate their findings to key stakeholders in the area, including public health agencies, community groups, and public at-large

COMMUNITY CORE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE NCPC MISSION

The community core will build on collaborations with local community based organizations (CBOs, e.g. Healthy House) and with state- and national-level CBOs (e.g. American Heart Association and California Youth Advocacy Network) to meet the community engagement goals of the proposed policy center

THE MAIN AIMS

- 1) **Build a network of CBOs seasoned in tobacco policy advocacy and those with local ties but less policy experience**
- 2) **Develop structured mentorship opportunities to build local CBO tobacco policy expertise**
- 3) **Develop local CBO expertise in working together with San Joaquin Valley youth to effect policy change.**



TRAINING CORE



INVOLVING AND TRAINING LOCAL YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IS CRUCIAL TO BUILDING TOBACCO AND CANNABIS CONTROL MOVEMENTS THE SJV

- ◊ The senior faculty and community partners will conduct a variety of learning opportunities for undergraduates, research associates, graduate students, citizen scientists, faculty, and community partners.

THE MAIN AIMS

- 1) Provision of relevant training including:**
 - a. Research methods – focus groups, survey development, flash polling
 - b. Youth – youth engagement, adult-youth partnerships
 - c. Policy
 - d. Dissemination methods
- 2) Training for a range of key stakeholders including:**

Community youth / Undergraduate students / Citizen scientists / Emerging researcher / Center junior faculty



NCPC LONG-TERM GOALS

- To our funder, California's Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program (TRDRP), NCPC will have 4 years to strengthen its foundation in the SJV and Foothills
- Our long-term goal will be to build our community network and strengthen community capacity to take control of their tobacco and cannabis programs
- Continue to produce cutting-edge research that informs policies and programs



SPECIAL THANKS

- ⬡ Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program (UCOP)
- ⬡ San Joaquin Valley Public Health Consortium
- ⬡ Assemblyperson Adam Gray
- ⬡ UC Merced Office of Research
- ⬡ Community Partners, AHA, Healthy House, and California Youth Advocacy Network
- ⬡ Towns and community groups across the SJV and Foothills who have written in to support the NCPC





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