

HVSSSC

Hudson Valley Student Support Services Center

175 Route 32 North | New Paltz, NY 12561 | Phone: 845-255-4874 | Fax: 845-255-3836

FACT SHEET

June 2009

Mary Grenz Jalloh, M.S., M.P.H., CHES, B.C.S.C.R.
Executive Director

Tammy Rhein, L.M.S.W., C.A.S.A.C., CPP
Program Coordinator

Movies, Smoking, and Teens

Adolescents who see smoking depicted in movies are more likely to try smoking. **A research review reported that the cumulative exposure to adult tobacco use on screen recruits 52 percent of new teen smokers each year.**

Prior research has established that social influences, such as family and peer smoking and tobacco advertising, are important determinants of smoking in adolescents. More recently, research has focused on the impact of smoking in entertainment -- including the effect of celebrities who smoke- on youth smoking.

A study funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) analyzed the amount of smoking depicted in the 500 most popular movies released between 1998 and 2002, as well as 32 high-grossing movies released in the first four months of 2003. A "smoking occurrence" was noted when tobacco use was depicted, either by a major or minor character or in the background. By this standard, **smoking occurred in 74 percent of the movies studied.**

Another four year study (2001-2004) of 433 movies found that 33% of G/PG rated movies and 71% of PG-13 movies included tobacco. A 2005 sampling found an increase to 45% of G/GP rated movies with tobacco imagery.

The team studied adolescents ages 10 to 14 and found that youth had a higher risk of smoking initiation as their exposure to movie smoking increased, with those youth most exposed to movie smoking being most at risk.

Adolescents with the greatest exposure to movie smoking were 2.6 times more likely to try smoking than their peers in the least exposed group, after controlling for other factors. The increased risk of smoking initiation associated with exposure to smoking in the movies was similar to that of other well-known risk factors, such as having a parent or sibling who smokes. This increased risk was seen across youth of all racial and ethnic groups, in all geographic regions of the country.

Various suggestions to curb adolescent exposure to movie smoking include: persuading the movie industry to voluntarily reduce depictions of smoking and cigarette brands; incorporating smoking into the movie ratings system to make parents aware of the risks a movie with smoking poses to the adolescent viewer; and encouraging parents to more strongly enforce restrictions on youths' viewing of R-rated movies, which contain the highest amounts of smoking.

A website that rates which movies contain smoking and whether or not the scenes promote or glamorize smoking is at: www.smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu (see RESOURCES for Website list).

Check out: www.RealityCheckNY.com