

# **Sauk County Tobacco Free Coalition Resolution Adopted by National Conference**

“Be it resolved that the National Conference on Tobacco or Health encourages policy changes that lead to the integration of evidence-based nicotine dependence treatment into substance dependence and mental health services.”

This resolution was submitted by the Sauk County Tobacco Free Coalition’s David Macmaster at the national conference of tobacco prevention and control advocates and experts in Minneapolis on Friday, October 26, 2007. The resolution was one of three resolutions adopted for action as priority issues by the conference. It is now expected that national tobacco policy will emphasize the need to provide nicotine dependence treatment in addiction and mental health programs.

Macmaster reported, “The issue was brought into prominence at the conference when a research finding was presented that people with substance abuse and mental illness get sick and die from tobacco related and caused diseases at from twice to four times the rate of the general population. Not only do those with these disorders get sick and die at such high rates, but they typically lose up to 25 years of their expected life spans.”

Sauk County Tobacco Free Coalition has been a state leader in the effort to achieve integration of nicotine dependence into alcohol and other drug abuse and mental health treatment programs. The effort has resulted in the development of a network of associations, agencies, and other stake-holders willing to begin a planning process that results in a successful integration of evidence-based nicotine dependence treatment into Wisconsin’s mental health and addiction services.

Stakeholders include the Division of Public Health’s Tobacco Prevention and Control program, the Wisconsin Alcohol and Drug Treatment Providers Association, the Wisconsin Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counselors, the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention and mental health representatives. The Governors State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse are also supportive of this initiative to save more Wisconsin lives using our existing programs and services.

“The Governor’s successful tobacco initiatives have made it more likely we will be able to complete an integration plan. With the increased tobacco tax increase, more funding for tobacco prevention and control, we have more to work with. When the smoke-free air law is passed it will put more pressure to help those addicted to nicotine, comments Judy Spring, Sauk County Tobacco Free Coalition Coordinator. “We are proud that a rural Wisconsin county can focus attention on a serious problem like the high loss of life of our family, friends and neighbors from tobacco and have our work rise to national attention.”

By David “Mac” Macmaster, CADC, PTTTS

Sauk County Tobacco Free Coalition