



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 29, 2018

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CHICAGO YOUTH CIGARETTE USE REACHES ALL-TIME LOW

New report shows decline among young adults following Tobacco 21 law

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced that Chicago's teen youth smoking rate has hit another all-time low, according to a new Healthy Chicago report. In 2017, only 6% of Chicago high school students reported smoking cigarettes. That number is both a new historic low and nearly 60 percent below 2011 figures, when 13.6% of teens reported smoking cigarettes.

"Chicago has become a national leader in the fight against tobacco and as these numbers prove, that fight is paying off," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "From raising the age to purchase tobacco to regulating e-cigarettes, we are creating Chicago's first tobacco-free generation."

Additionally, data from CDPH's annual Healthy Chicago survey show a sharp decline in use of both cigarettes and electronic cigarettes among 18-20 year-old residents between 2015 and 2016, from 15.2% to 9.7%. This decline follows the implementation of Chicago's Tobacco 21 law. Introduced by Mayor Emanuel and passed by the Chicago City Council, Tobacco 21 raised the age for purchasing tobacco within city limits to 21 from 18.

"We have made real progress, but there is still more work to do," said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita. "By working with community partners, parents and students, we will continue to drive these numbers down so every child has the opportunity to become a healthy, tobacco-free adult."

Previously, CDPH and its partners had set a goal of reducing youth smoking by 10% by 2020. With today's report, that goal has already been exceeded more than two years ahead of schedule. Even with this progress, challenges remain. In addition to cigarettes, teens also reported using cigars (7.2%) and smokeless tobacco (4.5%). The report for the first time provides data on e-cig use among youth (6.6%). Tobacco use in any form by youth can be harmful and may lead to nicotine addiction among other serious health consequences.

"We know that almost all tobacco use begins in youth and young adulthood which is why policies like Tobacco 21 are so important," said, Joel Africk, President and Chief Executive Officer, Respiratory Health Association, Healthy Chicago's community co-leader for tobacco control.

"Chicago continues to lead the fight against tobacco. We're encouraged by the data, it demonstrates that our collective efforts are successful in building a tobacco-free generation."

Under Mayor Emanuel, Chicago has become a national leader in reducing tobacco use by implementing innovative laws that make smoking more expensive while providing additional revenue to youth health programs. The City has committed \$2 million in new revenue yielded by the tax on e-cigarettes to supporting the health of youth through the creation or expansion of four new school-based health centers by 2019. The e-cigarette tax, enacted in 2015, follows a series of commitments and innovative policies enacted by the administration to protect youth from the harms of tobacco.

Additionally, since 2011, Chicago has enacted policies and other initiatives aimed at protecting youth from the addictive and dangerous habit of using tobacco, the leading cause of preventable disease and death, including:

- **Raising the minimum legal purchase age for tobacco products from 18 to 21**, helping to keep young adults from taking up the habit.
- **Increasing the cost of tobacco** which has been proven to reduce smoking rates. Together with County and State taxes, Chicago has the highest combined cigarette tax in the nation. Chicago has instituted new taxes for e-cigarettes and prohibits the use of coupons or other discounts for tobacco products.
- **Regulating e-cigarettes** and helping to keep them out of the hands of Chicago's youth and ensuring indoor spaces remain free from smoke and vapor.
- **Expanding Chicago's smoke-free environments** to include all parks, marinas and beaches, and more public housing, hospitals and college campuses.
- **Launching hard-hitting media campaigns** focused on the products and marketing tactics Big Tobacco uses to hook young people—including menthol, flavored tobacco and e-cigarettes.

To learn more about how we ensure that the next generation is tobacco-free, please visit the Truth Initiative's website at www.truthinitiative.org.

###