

January 2, 2008

**MAYOR BLOOMBERG, HEALTH COMMISSIONER FRIEDEN AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
COMMISSIONER MINTZ ANNOUNCE THAT THE SMOKING RATE AMONG NEW YORK CITY TEENS
WAS LOWEST ON RECORD IN 2007**

Sustained Anti-Tobacco Initiatives Cut Teen Smoking by More Than Half Over Six Years

Bronx Has Lowest Prevalence of Teen Smoking in the Five Boroughs

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, [Health](#) Commissioner Dr. Thomas R. Frieden and [Consumer Affairs](#) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz released new data today from the 2007 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey showing that cigarette smoking among New York City teens declined by 20% between 2005 and 2007. The City's teen smoking rate has dropped by more than half over the past six years from 17.6 percent in 2001 to 8.5 percent in 2007, the current rate that is about two-thirds lower than the latest available national teen smoking rate of 23 percent. The Mayor linked the continuing decline - which far exceeds the national decline - to the City's sustained efforts to reduce smoking among adults. Those efforts include a tax increase, the smoke-free workplace law, and TV and subway ads that graphically depict the realities of tobacco-related illnesses.

"In 2001, roughly one out of every six high school students smoked. Today, that has fallen to about one out of every 12 - or about 8.5% of students," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The reduction in teen smoking we've achieved in New York City will eventually prevent at least 8,000 premature deaths. These new numbers prove what we in New York have long believed: when you take bold public health measures, you get results."

"Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in New York City and few people over the age of 18 start smoking for the first time," said Commissioner Frieden. "Preventing youth smoking will further reduce adult smoking and premature deaths in years to come. Parents should know that the strongest predictor of whether their children will smoke is if they themselves smoke."

In 2007, an estimated 20,000 students smoked cigarettes. Had smoking not declined since 2001, there would have been at least 24,000 additional teens smoking in New York City. This decrease will prevent an estimated 8,000 premature deaths. The largest recent declines in teen smoking were observed in Staten Island (down 36 percent between 2005 and 2007), and the Bronx (down 37 percent). Teen smoking remains highest in Staten Island at 14.7 percent.

In addition to efforts to reduce smoking, New York City has also gotten tougher at enforcing cigarette sales to minors. "With our Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program, we are conducting more undercover inspections than ever, and under the Mayor's leadership, raising compliance to levels never before seen," said Commissioner Mintz. "While we're thrilled with the program's success and high compliance, our teams continue to go undercover every day to make sure businesses do the right thing and communities are protected. Parents and kids can be the most helpful by reporting stores that make illegal sales."

The New York City Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program employs teens ages 15 to 17 to work undercover, accompanied by agency inspectors. The teens are paid \$7.25 per hour plus Metro Cards and are required to take a no-smoking pledge. The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) licenses approximately 11,000 tobacco retailers in New York City, and conducts daily inspections at stores year-round in all five boroughs. In fiscal year 2007, DCA conducted nearly 16,000 such inspections. In fiscal year 2007, 89 percent of businesses were in compliance for not selling cigarettes to teens, while in November alone, 93 percent of businesses -an all-time record high-stopped selling cigarettes to kids after being issued

a violation. DCA's Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program is made possible by a New York State grant.

Bronx public high school students have the lowest prevalence of smoking in the city at 6.2 percent - a tremendous benchmark as historically, communities with socioeconomic challenges often have significant health disparities compared to other parts of the City. For example, compared with other boroughs, the Bronx has the highest HIV and diabetes death rates.

Smoking rates do not vary significantly by age or grade among New York City students, but girls previously reported a higher rate than boys. Between 2005 and 2007, however, the smoking rate for teenage boys fell from 10.5 percent to 8.3 percent, while the rate for teenage girls dropped from 12 percent to 8.6 percent, eliminating the differences in smoking by gender in 2007.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

This information is based on results of the 2007 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire adapted for New York City from protocols developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nationally, the survey is conducted in both public and private schools. In New York City, the survey has been conducted in public schools every two years since 1997. From 1997 to 2001 the survey was conducted by the Department of Education ([DOE](#)); since 2003, it has been conducted jointly by DOE and the Health Department.

For smokers, quitting is the single most important thing they can do for their health and the health of their families. Smoking causes lung and mouth cancer, as well as stroke and heart disease. After just 24 hours of being tobacco free, a person's risk of heart attack drops. Within 30 days, lung function improves.

For more information about the dangers of smoking - and how to stop - call 311. New Yorkers looking to obtain free nicotine patches can visit the Staten Island Ferry Whitehall Terminal in Manhattan on January 3rd and 4th from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM, or the Kings Plaza Mall in Brooklyn between January 7th and January 11th from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

