

The American Legacy Foundation® endorses clear actions that can reduce the devastating impact of smoking in movies on adolescent smoking initiation.

Smoking in youth-rated films has a powerful impact on youth smoking initiation, influencing 180,000 teens, ages 12-17, to take up smoking each year.^{1,2,3,4,5,6} A 2008 report published by the National Cancer Institute has confirmed that exposure to smoking in the movies promotes adolescent smoking initiation⁷ and other studies have found that seeing smoking in the movies is a catalyst for between one-third and one-half of adolescents starting to smoke.^{8,9} Legacy endorses the four Smoke-Free Movie Principles as the best way to address the devastating impact of movie smoking on our children's health:

- **Require strong anti-tobacco ads** that are evidence-based and proven effective to run before any film with any tobacco presence, regardless of its rating.
- **Stop brand identification** in movies through the depiction of identifiable packs of cigarettes, billboards, or other forms of tobacco brand identification.
- Certify no pay-offs through a statement in the movie credits that nobody on the production received anything of value in exchange for using or displaying tobacco.
- **Rate all new movies with smoking "R"**, unless the movie clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of smoking or if it accurately depicts the behavior of an actual, historical figure.

Strong anti-tobacco ads. Showing strong anti-tobacco ads before all movies with smoking can help inoculate youth from the impact of movie smoking imagery.¹⁰ It is essential that the ads are evidence-based, i.e., they have actually been shown to decrease youth smoking. Legacy's **truth**[®] ads fit the bill. Peer-reviewed research confirms that **truth**[®] ads accounted for 22% of the national decline in youth smoking between 2000 and 2002, and approximately 450,000 fewer adolescents and young adults initiated smoking from 2000 to 2004 as a result of the **truth**[®] campaign.¹¹ On the other hand, tobacco industry "youth prevention" ads have actually led to an increase in youths' intentions to smoke as well as increases in youth smoking.^{12,13} These ads are entirely unacceptable. We are pleased that some movie studios have included **truth**[®] ads on DVDs of movies depicting smoking but it is imperative that demonstrated-effective anti-smoking ads be included in all theatrical releases, DVDs and other movie formats.

No Brand Identification. Tobacco brands are some of the most heavily promoted and powerful brands in the world.^{14,15} Teens are much more susceptible to brand promotion than are adults.¹⁶ Eight-one percent of teen smokers, ages 12-17, smoke one of the three of the most heavily promoted brands, Marlboro, Newport or Camel; nearly half smoke Marlboros.¹⁷ Tobacco brands have no place in the movies.

Certify No Pay-offs: There is a well-documented history of paid tobacco product placement in the movies.¹⁸ Movie studios deny that this is a current practice. Tobacco companies that are parties to the Master Settlement Agreement are prohibited from paying for brand placement.¹⁹ The studios should be willing to take this step and certify that there are, in fact, no pay offs anywhere in the production chain.

“R” ratings: Despite the well-documented impact of movie smoking on youth smoking initiation, smoking still remains widespread in youth-rated movies. It appears in more than half of G, PG and PG-13 movies. Youth-rated movies are seen by three times as many teens as R-rated movies. The amount of tobacco use and imagery contained in youth-rated movies has remained relatively stable since 1996. This may be explained by a downward ratings creep, with a higher percentage of movies each year rated in the youth category.²⁰ Limiting smoking to R-rated movies will dramatically limit youth exposure to movie smoking and its powerful influence on youth smoking initiation.

These principles enjoy strong public support. More than 80% of U.S. adults agree that smoking in movies can influence young people to smoke; 70% agree with an R-rating for movies with smoking; and more than 60% want tobacco branding out of movies.²¹ In addition to the support of Legacy, these principles have been endorsed by the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association, Smoke Free Movies and numerous other national and state public health organizations.²²

SOURCES

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- ² SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2006 and 2007. State Estimates of Substance Use and Mental Health from the 2006-7 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health. Estimated numbers in the population for Tables B.1 to B.24: [Online] Table 14. Cigarette Use in Past Month, by Age Group and State: Estimated Numbers (in Thousands), Annual Averages Based on 2006 and 2007 NSDUHs. Consulted at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/state/ageTabs.htm> on 23 October 2009 <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/state/ageTabs.htm> on %2023%20October%202009.
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- ¹¹ Farrelly MC, Nonnemaker J, Davis KC, Hussin A. The Influence of the National truth Campaign on Smoking Initiation. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2009; 36(5):379-384.
- ¹² Farrelly MC, Heaton CG, Davis KC, Messeri P, Hersey JC, Haviland ML. Getting to the truth: evaluating national tobacco countermarketing campaigns. *American Journal of Public Health* 2002; 92 (6): 901-907. (Tobacco industry "prevention" campaign directly targeted to youth resulted in increased intentions to smoke.)
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- ¹⁷ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables. September 2008.
- ¹⁸ See <http://www.smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu/problem/bigtobacco.html> for a review of this history.
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- ²¹ McMillen R, Tanski S, Winickoff J, Valentine N, Attitudes about smoking in the movies. The Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center. 2006.
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