Social Norms* Influencing Tobacco Use in Maine

27,000 The number of Maine’s youth now under 18 who will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.¹

What are the facts?

• Smoking rates are higher for young people who live with other smokers. (2009 MIYHS)
• Only 35% of middle and high school aged children who live with smokers do not take up the habit. (2009 MIYHS)
• Tobacco use by parents, siblings and friends plays an important role in influencing tobacco use initiation by youth.¹²
• Home smoking bans can impact secondhand smoke exposure for non-smokers, as well as the susceptibility of youth in becoming smokers.³
• Home bans combined with parents who do not smoke, have the most influence in preventing youth tobacco use.³
• Strong parental disapproval of smoking reduces the influence of parental and peer smoking behaviors on youth.⁴

How are we doing?

• Youth who do not smoke are much more likely (65%) to live in a household of non-smokers than to live with smokers (35%).⁵
• Middle school and high school youth who do not smoke were more likely to report receiving advice from their parents to not smoke, compared to middle school and high school youth who smoke.⁵
• People in Maine tend to overestimate the smoking rate. In 2009, when asked what they thought the smoking rate was, the average estimate among smokers was 42.4%. Non-smokers put the number at 36.3%. The actual smoking rate for Maine was 17.3% in 2009.⁶

*Social norms are the rules that a group uses for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. These rules may be explicit or implicit.
What are the facts?

• Media communications on tobacco such as brand-specific advertising, tobacco use in entertainment, as well as campaigns for tobacco control, such as counter-advertising, play a key role in shaping tobacco-related knowledge, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors among individuals and within communities.7
• Youth exposure to tobacco industry advertising is associated with smoking initiation or future intentions to smoke; in addition, price-based promotional offers are especially influential on youth becoming smokers.8
• Youth who believe it is easy to get cigarettes are at higher risk for smoking; this risk is increased if the youth also has friends who smoke.9
• Restricting youth access to tobacco products involves having retailers comply with tobacco sales laws and limiting the social sources that youth use to obtain cigarettes.10

How are we doing?

• Youth who do not smoke were more likely to report that all four of their best friends do not smoke, compared to youth who smoke; also, a significant proportion of youth who smoke reported that all four of their best friends smoke.5
• Youth who smoke were more likely to have seen “a lot” of tobacco industry advertisements, compared to youth who do not smoke.5
• In general, youth who smoke were more likely to say it would be “easy” to obtain cigarettes, compared to youth who do not smoke.5
• Middle school youth who smoke usually got their cigarettes by stealing or from a friend. High school youth who smoke typically gave money to someone to buy cigarettes or got cigarettes from a friend.5
• Maine consistently gets high scores when testing retail store compliance with current laws on selling tobacco products to youth. The state's tobacco prevention and control program and the Attorney General's Office implement the NO BUTS! Program in an effort to work with retailers to help them enforce age restrictions on the sale of tobacco products.

5. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2008 MYDAUS/Maine Y outh Tobacco Survey Results.