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News Release

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Utah's Adult Smoking Rate Drops

UDOH program reduces health and economic burden of tobacco use

(Salt Lake City) –Utah's adult smoking rate has been driven down to 9.1 percent, according to the just-released Utah Department of Health (UDOH) *Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) Ninth Annual Report*. This is a 33 percent decline since the TPCP was funded with Master Settlement tobacco restitution funds in 1999. Credit for the decrease is given, in large part, to the Utah State Legislature for funding an effective, state-run, comprehensive, tobacco prevention and cessation program.

“The anti-tobacco program has been instrumental in decreasing Utah's tobacco use rate,” said David Sundwall, executive director, UDOH. “If the smoking rate had not declined since the program was funded in 1999, Utah would have 85,000 additional adult smokers, a number that is equal to half the population of Salt Lake City.”

The health impacts of tobacco are well known. However, the 2009 report reveals the lesser known facts about the economic burden of tobacco use, which costs taxpayers \$369 million in smoking-attributable medical expenses and \$294 million in lost productivity each year. By lowering these costs, the anti-tobacco program contributes to the economic well-being of the state. Each one percentage point reduction in the smoking rate equals savings of \$315 million in future health care costs.

The report also finds that demand for smoking cessation services went up by more than 36 percent when compared to the previous fiscal year. Most smokers want to quit, with 60 percent of smokers stating they want to quit their addiction during the coming month.

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Significant strides have been made in tobacco prevention and control thanks to local health departments, The TRUTH marketing campaign, and community partners. But much remains to be done, as nearly 190,000 Utahns still smoke and 1,150 Utahns die each year because of their addiction.

“In addition, the tobacco industry is aggressively marketing a new line of smokeless tobacco products designed to addict a new generation of tobacco users and replace those who quit or die” said Sundwall.

New data also show a 29 percent decline in smoking among pregnant women and a 34 percent decline in high school smoking since 1999. For more information or to obtain a copy of the 2009 Annual Report, visit www.TobaccoFreeUtah.org. For free and confidential help quitting tobacco, call 888.567.TRUTH (8788) or visit www.UtahQuitNet.com.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.