



**Building Capacity for Tobacco Screening and Referral to Treatment in
Boston Community Health Centers:
A Collaborative Between State and City Health Departments.**

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Abstract

According to the Boston 2005 Behavior Risk Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), 17% of Bostonians surveyed smoked, and 7% had diabetes. Boston BRFSS data also suggest that rates of smoking and diagnosed asthma in adult Boston public housing residents are almost twice that of residents of market rate housing. In 2006, Mass Health, the comprehensive state Medicaid plan serving low-income Massachusetts residents, instituted a comprehensive tobacco treatment benefit.

The Boston Public Health Commission's (BPHC) Asthma and Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, Boston Steps initiative and Tobacco Control Program collaborated with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Tobacco Control Program (MTCP), University of Massachusetts Medical School Tobacco Program and Mass Health to increase capacity of Boston community health centers (CHCs) to provide screening, counseling and treatment to adult and pediatric patients and to fully utilize the new benefit.



Abstract continued

- Seventy-five scholarships were provided to Boston CHCs. Scholarships were for training in Basic Skills for Working with Smokers. Technical assistance was provided on systems to ensure screening, documentation and billing.
- Funding provided by BPHC's Tobacco Control Program and the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program was pivotal in developing a skilled tobacco treatment workforce. Collaboration of these programs provided the support, technical assistance, and resources needed to improve tobacco education, screening, and referral to treatment in Boston. Increases in screening rates are being tracked over three years, but preliminary data indicate that some health centers have successfully institutionalized tobacco screening. Challenges have included staff turnover and systems barriers including lack of electronic medical record.



Background

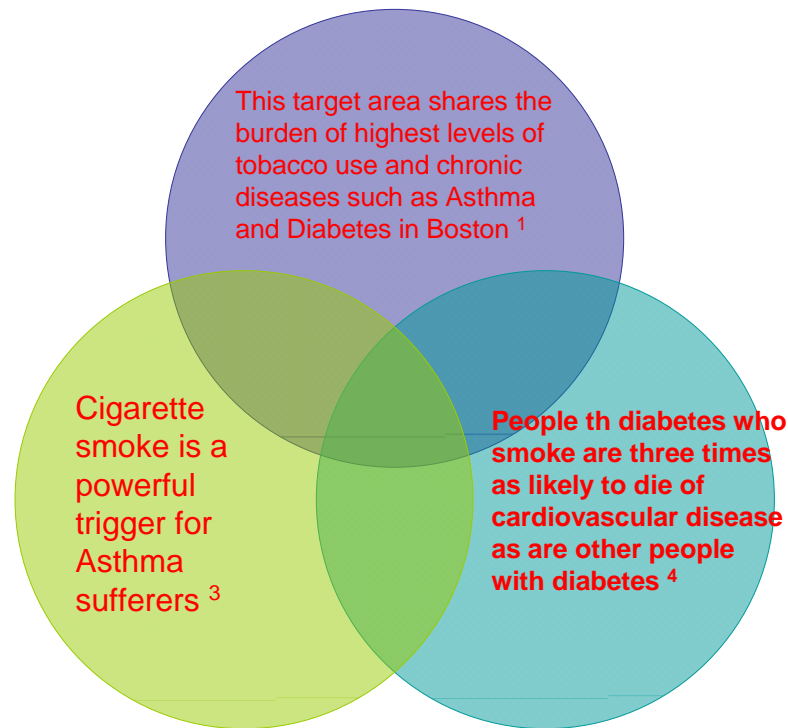
- The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), is the city's health department. It's mission is to protect, preserve and promote the health and well-being of Boston residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Core activities include communicable disease surveillance and control, maternal and child health services, chronic disease prevention and control, tobacco control, substance abuse services, homeless services, environmental health functions, emergency medical services and health data collection.
- The following programs partnered to increase tobacco screening, counseling, and treatment capacity in Boston community health centers.
 - BPHC Asthma and Diabetes program, Boston Steps Initiative, and Tobacco Control Program
 - Massachusetts Department of Public Health Tobacco Control Program
 - University of Massachusetts Medical School Tobacco Program
 - Mass Health, (Massachusetts's Medicaid



Background continued

- BPHC's Boston Steps provided funding to community health centers to address obesity/overweight, diabetes, asthma and their key risk factors: lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco use, and environmental triggers for Asthma .
- This funding required community health centers to create a standardized system for ensuring tobacco screenings are completed and recorded for all annual well-patient visits (both adult and pediatric patients). Preliminary data from Mass Health (Massachusetts's Medicaid) based on 80,000 respondents, reports the following cessation benefit survey utilization results:
 - 40-50% of all Mass Health subscribers had heard of the benefit.
 - Of those, 12% had utilized it, and of that number, 12% had quit.
 - Approximately 32,000 subscribers have taken advantage of the tobacco cessation benefit from July of 2006 through August of 2007.⁵

Burden of Boston Target Neighborhoods



Within the eight Boston neighborhood target areas for this project, 23% are current smokers.²



Methods

- Boston Community Health Centers (CHCs) were provided with training and technical assistance in Quit Works and tobacco cessation counseling.
- Seventy five Scholarships were provided to Community Health Centers in the online training Basic Skills for Working with Smokers.
- Upon completion, CHC staff members had the option of completing course certification and exam to become a TTS.



Results

- Seventy- five scholarships for Basic Skills for Working with Smokers online training were provided to Boston CHCs.⁶
- In 2007, 23 CHC or affiliated agency staff completed the 5-day Tobacco Treatment Specialist Core Certification training provided by University of Massachusetts Medical School Tobacco Program.⁶
- Twelve of 14 funded CHCs have established standardized systems for completing tobacco screening.²
- Eight of these CHCs are currently offering smoking cessation programs ²



Community Health Center Data

- Table A and B reflect all the adult and pediatric patients receiving tobacco screening at participating CHCs.
- Data for year two was not available across all CHCs.

Table A

Adult tobacco screening rates from participating CHC's

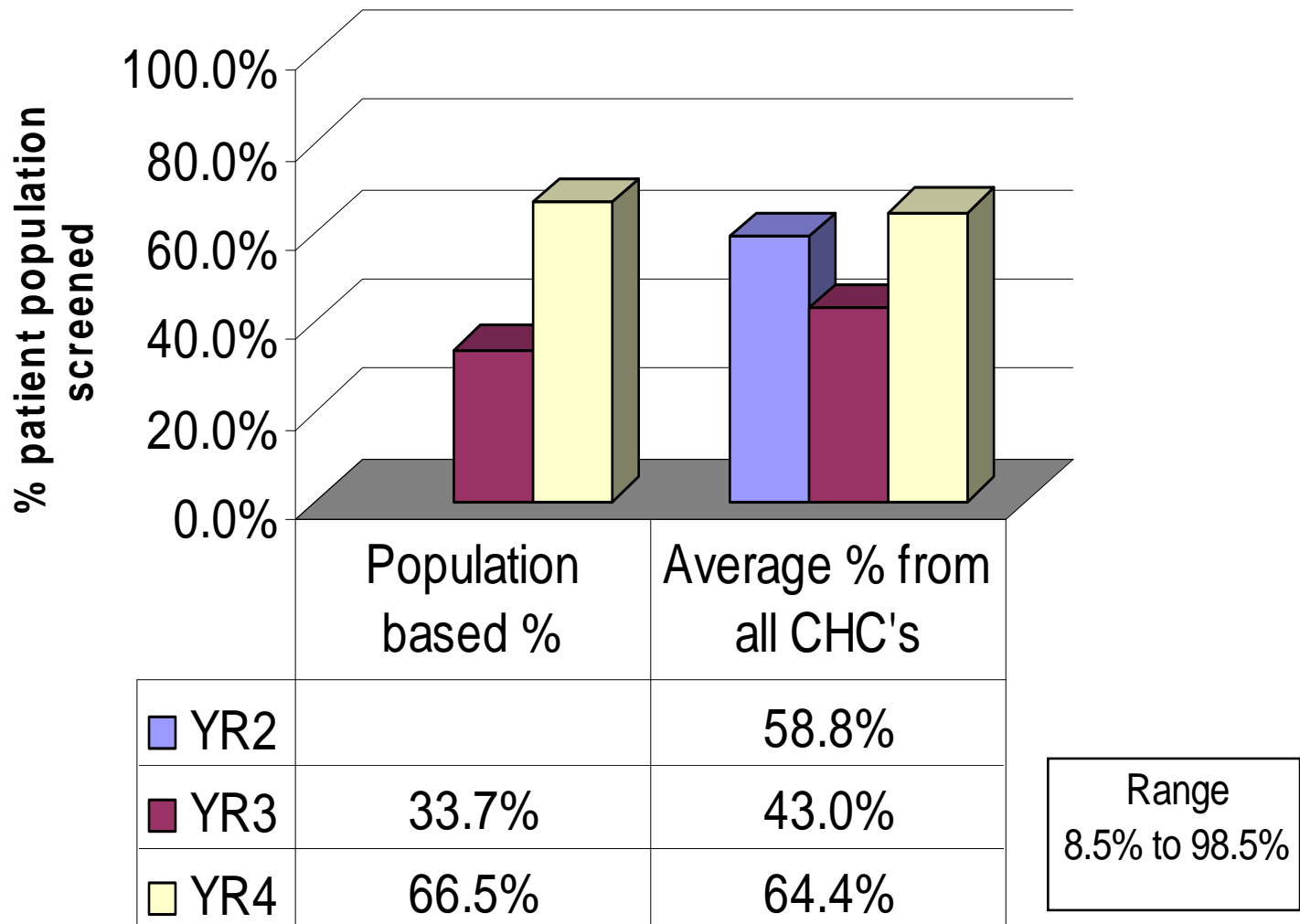
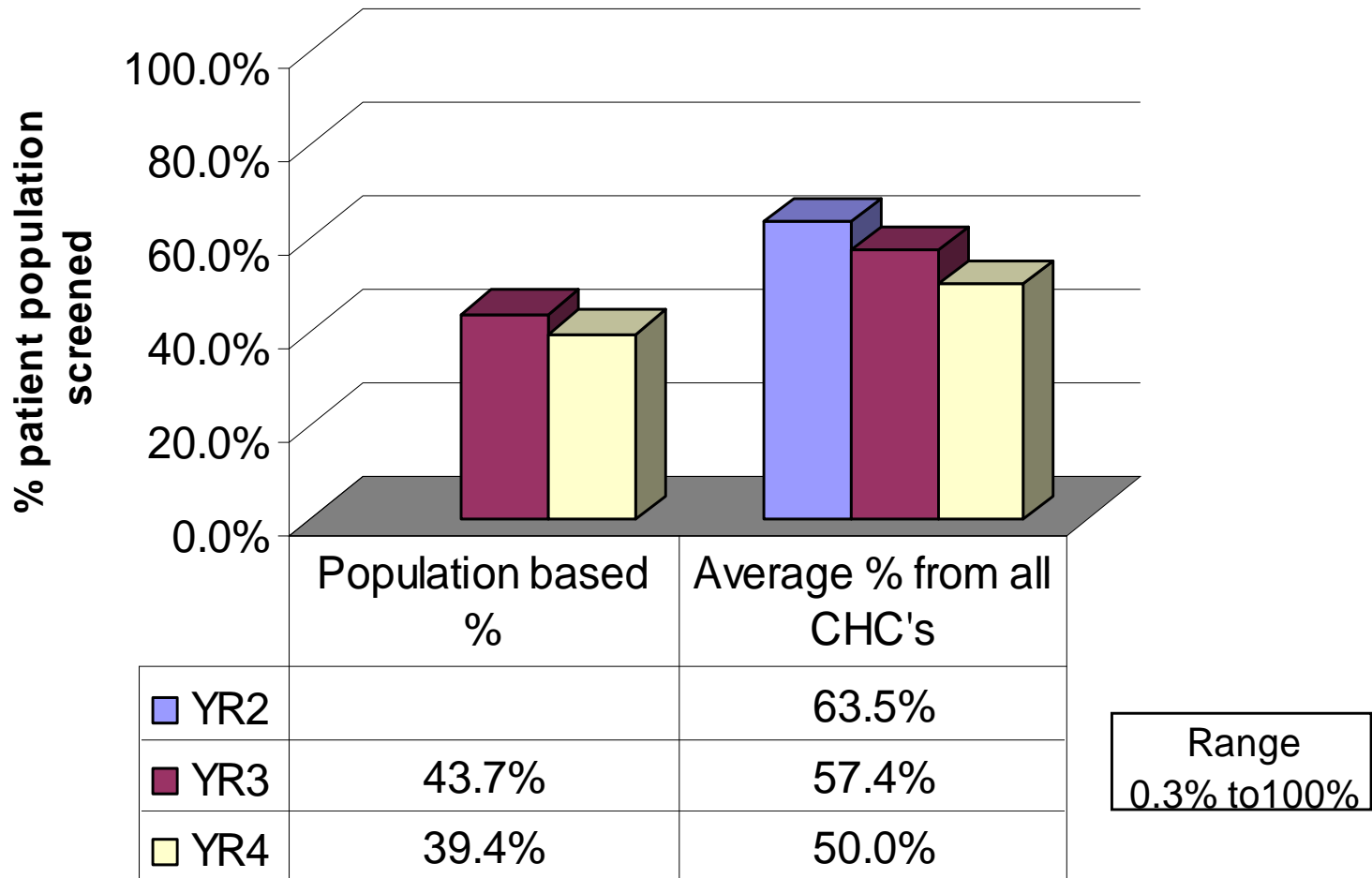


Table B

Pediatric tobacco screening rates from participating CHC's





Limitations

- Those who completed the on line Basic Skills for Working with Smokers reported varying levels of comfort with online training and need for technical assistance.⁶
- Staff who completed the online training also reported needing more time than was originally allotted for training.⁶
- Successful CHC documentation of screening was affected by several factors
 - lack of electronic medical record
 - limited electronic medical record capacity
 - staff consistency in documentation of completed screens ²
- Several CHCs report data entry inconsistency with amount of patients actually screened.
- Data entry inconsistencies may also be attributed to staff turnover.²



Next Steps

- The next in person training will be offered by University of Massachusetts Medical School in January 2009.⁶
- BPHC's Asthma and Tobacco programs will continue to provide technical assistance in tobacco cessation screening and counseling.



References

1. Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Boston Public Health Commission, 2005.
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3. Boston Public Health Commission, Asthma Program
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4. Boston Public Health Commission, Diabetes Program
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5. Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Tobacco Control Program, *Medicaid Cessation Pilot* (2007).
6. University of Massachusetts Medical School Tobacco Program, 2007.