



Marion County OREGON

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Survey of Willamette University Students Finds Low Exposure to Tobacco Sampling

A recent survey of Willamette University students found that less than 5 percent had been exposed to either tobacco sampling or tobacco-sponsored events in the past year in Salem-Keizer. Tobacco sampling has been in the forefront of recent media since introduction of House Bill 2358 in the Oregon legislature in January of 2009.

Kelly White, MPH, Tobacco Prevention Health Educator of the Marion County Health Department conducted the survey. College students were chosen as the target of this survey based on results from a study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* that found that young adults, aged 18-24, are the most targeted in terms of tobacco industry marketing. This is because research has shown this is the time in which experimental or occasional smoking transitions to a regular habit.

The purpose of the survey was to assess Willamette University students' exposure to tobacco sampling and promotions. Participants were students enrolled at Willamette University January 27 through March 20, 2009; out of the 2,728 current students, 511 responded to the online survey.

Questions about tobacco products being given away as free, also known as tobacco sampling, showed that 2.4 percent of respondents had been to such an event in the past year in Salem-Keizer. The responses indicated that the product given away most often was chewing tobacco and the location where the tobacco products were given away most often was a convenience store. In regards to events sponsored by tobacco companies, also known as tobacco promotions, responses showed that 4.4 percent of respondents had been to an event sponsored by a tobacco company, and the most common types of events were concerts.

Tobacco sampling has received recent media attention given the introduction of House Bill 2358 which requests a ban on distribution of free samples of non-cigarette tobacco products in the state. The bill passed in the house on April 28, had a public hearing and work session on May 27 and 28, and has now been sent to the rules committee.

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