

Tobacco-free sports and recreation: All you need to do is get the ball rolling!

“It was a much more positive experience than I would have imagined, much simpler than I ever imagined.” - Nova Scotia soccer coach

When the Cole Harbour Soccer Club decided to promote a tobacco-free soccer message, it never occurred to them that within a few years, they would have influenced sports groups across the entire province. According to one coach: “This whole thing has sent a message right through the soccer community. No matter where we went, what tournaments we were in, people were chatting about it.”

Creating an environment that de-normalized tobacco use was an important first step for Cole Harbour. They implemented a tobacco-free policy which discouraged the use of tobacco products, promoted tobacco-free soccer and supported coaches to be role models.

Once the policy was established, awareness and education materials such as logo badges for uniforms, t-shirts and whistle straps proved to be the next most important success factor. Ironically, one of the most difficult challenges the club experienced was to get the badges sewn on the uniforms, prompting one coach to observe: “If that was the worst thing we had as a challenge. I say it was pretty successful from an implementation perspective.”

Robert Strang, the President of Smoke-Free Nova Scotia is excited by the tremendous potential this project has within the Province. “It has influenced parents and kids right where it matters most and has the potential to change the culture for the next generation of kids.” Strang believes that one of the reasons why the project has been so successful is because the impetus came directly from the community. His advice to other provinces: Engage the coaches and keep the policy and messages clear and simple.

The Tobacco-Free Sport and Recreation Guide is available online at www.hpclearinghouse.ca/act/tfsr.htm or by calling the Nova Scotia Health Promotion Clearinghouse at (902) 494-1917.