

THE REAL COST: RESEARCH + EVALUATION

“The Real Cost” campaign is grounded in scientific research and uses evidence-based practices proven to reduce youth tobacco use.

FDA’s youth tobacco prevention campaign, “The Real Cost,” is based on a robust body of evidence that supports the use of mass media campaigns to prevent and reduce youth tobacco use. Some of this evidence is derived from state and national youth tobacco prevention campaigns as well as youth-focused health campaigns on topics other than tobacco. Campaign efforts are informed by recognized best practices for mass media campaigns, lessons learned from previous efforts to educate the public about tobacco, and FDA’s own research.

Formative Research

FDA conducted extensive research to develop effective outreach strategies and messaging to reach “The Real Cost” target audiences. These efforts included:

- Comprehensive literature reviews and target audience analyses to identify and refine our target audiences;
- Consultation with experts in tobacco public health education, marketing, and campaign development;
- Focus groups with members of each target audience to identify promising messages, and assess their perceptions of draft advertising concepts; and
- Testing of near-final TV advertisements with members of each target audience to measure perceived effectiveness, levels of engagement, and message comprehension, and to check for any unintended consequences.

Campaign Evaluation

FDA’s goal is to reduce the number of youth ages 12-17 who use cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.

To assess our success achieving this goal, “The Real Cost” campaign will be evaluated through two multi-year, in-person, nationwide studies. The study designs are longitudinal, meaning the evaluators will attempt to follow the same youth over time. The first study will monitor changes in tobacco-related knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors for cigarette use based on the exposure to the campaign. The second study will monitor changes in tobacco-related knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions for smokeless tobacco use based on exposure to the campaign.

AD COPY TESTING

Research results indicated the near-final TV advertisements provided understandable and engaging messages about the harms of tobacco use without potential unintended adverse or counterproductive message effects.

Testing indicated all the ads would likely lead to increased negative feelings about tobacco use, decreased intention to initiate, and increased intention to quit using tobacco products.

EVALUATION RESEARCH

Evaluation results will be used to assess changes in tobacco-related knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and behaviors over time. The studies will focus on behavior change associated with cigarette use and behavioral intentions around the use of smokeless tobacco among youth ages 12-17.

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