



M.E.S.S.

(Mothers Eliminating Secondhand Smoke)

What is M.E.S.S.?

An exciting initiative to address secondhand smoke, M.E.S.S. is designed to ensure the overall well-being of women and children through creating voluntary smoke-free homes, smoke-free vehicles and policy adoption within the faith community.

M.E.S.S. is a collaborative effort between Hold Out the Lifeline: A Mission to Families and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. Its overall purpose is to build an advocacy network among faith-based organizations and other appropriate settings.

Why do we need M.E.S.S.?

According to *Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General*, smoking is a woman's issue, and secondhand smoke causes lung cancer and heart disease among women who have never smoked. Children are especially vulnerable to secondhand smoke, and their exposure is always involuntary. In South Carolina, 54.8 percent of middle schoolers and 68.2 percent of high schoolers reported being in the same room or car with a smoker during the same week they were surveyed. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kid's 2011 *Mother's Day Smoking Data*, 15.7 percent of pregnant women in South Carolina are smokers. In addition, 220 S.C. children each year lose their mothers to smoking.

Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for ear infections, bronchitis cases, asthma attacks and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) deaths.

What does secondhand smoke cause?

- ❖ In pregnant women, it can lead to miscarriage, premature births and low birth weight babies.
- ❖ In children, it causes more upper respiratory infections, bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and more severe cases of asthma.
- ❖ In everyone, it can lead to coughing and wheezing, sore throats, colds, eye irritation, hoarseness.
- ❖ It has been linked to severe diseases such as lung, breast and prostate cancer; heart disease and emphysema.

What are the goals of M.E.S.S.?

- ❖ Reduce exposure to secondhand smoke;
- ❖ Decrease smoking among women;
- ❖ Prevent the initiation of tobacco use among children; and
- ❖ Promote the adoption and enforcement of model policy for 100 percent tobacco-free campuses within the faith-based setting.

How can you get involved or learn more about M.E.S.S.?

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