

FDA effort aims to curb smoking in LGBT community

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This image provided by the Food and Drug Administration shows a poster from the agency's "This Free Life" campaign, the FDA's latest anti-smoking campaign, which takes aim at young adults in the LGBT community, who

officials say are nearly twice as likely to use tobacco as their peers. (Food and Drug Administration via AP)

The Food and Drug Administration's latest anti-smoking campaign takes aim at young adults in the LGBT community, who officials say are nearly twice as likely to use tobacco as their peers.

The \$35.7 million effort targets the estimated 40 percent of 2 million LGBT young adults in the U.S. who occasionally smoke. Dubbed "This Free Life," the campaign will begin running print, digital and outdoor advertising in 12 markets this week. The ads use the slogan "Freedom to be, Tobacco-Free," and are aimed at adults ages 18 to 24.

FDA officials attribute the higher smoking rate in the LGBT community to the "coming out" process, which can cause anxiety and social stigma that may drive people to use tobacco. The agency also points to research suggesting the use of tobacco by gay celebrities encourages younger people to take up smoking.

The federal campaign "is designed to challenge the perception that tobacco use is a necessary part of LGBT culture," said Richard Wolitski, an official with the Department for Health and Human Services, in a statement.

Tobacco companies are footing the bill for the campaign through fees charged under a 2009 law that created the FDA's tobacco program. Among other powers, the FDA can restrict marketing of tobacco products to young people and evaluate the health risks of new tobacco products before they launch.

Monday's announcement follows the launch of a similar \$36 million anti-

smoking campaign aimed at rural teenagers announced last month. Last year the FDA launched a \$128 million campaign targeting urban minority youth using hip-hop music and culture.

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