

Smoke-Free Public Housing

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rule prohibiting certain tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and waterpipes/hookah) in low-rent public housing is an opportunity to work toward stronger smoke-free policies in both public and private multiunit housing (MUH).

Final Evaluation Reports from California projects that have worked on smoke-free MUH in public housing offer these recommendations:

Assess the community's needs

- Early, extensive evaluation of the community is essential to demonstrate need and support for smoke-free policies.
- Example process evaluation activities: Key informant interviews with housing authority residents and staff, focus groups of MUH residents, public opinion polls.
- Example outcome evaluation activities: Pre- and post-intervention observational surveys of public housing sites, review of rental agreements/lease documents.

Build relationships with housing residents and staff

- Build relationships with resident councils, tenant associations, community organizations, housing authority directors and staff, and mobilize new allies in the community (such as potential city council advocates).
- Bringing tenant advocates into the process can ensure relevant input, as well as buy-in from all groups affected by the policy change.
- This could take the form of expanding an existing tobacco control coalition, or creating a separate taskforce dedicated to public housing.

Focus on education and remove barriers to smoking cessation

- Smoke-free policies appear difficult to enforce, but community education (including clear signage), resident involvement in the implementation process, and readily available cessation resources can effectively ensure compliance with a smoke-free policy.
- Public housing tenants are often from vulnerable populations, such as those of advanced age or those with disabilities. Enforcement measures and cessation resources should take into account the needs of these residents. Creating a menu of enforcement options may be helpful.
- Collaborate with resources such as the California Smokers' Helpline (<https://www.nobutts.org/>) and local services to make cessation resources more accessible. For example, direct web-based referral to the Helpline.

Resources

- Smoke-Free Housing: A Toolkit for Owners/Management Agents of Federally Assisted Public and Multi-family Housing (<https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=pdfowners.pdf>)
- TCEC database of data collection instruments, searchable by topic, type, indicator, and language: <http://tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu/data-collection/instrument-search.html>
- Rover: California's Tobacco Control Library features an online catalog of over 20,000 resources to request or download, including project Final Evaluation Reports (<https://rover.catcp.org/>)