

# Fact Sheet #7: Smoking in Apartments and Multi-Unit Housing

## 4.5 Million 15-24 year olds are living in rental housing in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

### What is Happening?

- Secondhand smoke is the third leading preventable cause of death in the country, killing 65,000 nonsmokers each year.<sup>2</sup>
- Over 80% of Californians agree that the common areas of apartment complexes (i.e. Swimming pools, laundry rooms, recreation areas) should be completely smoke-free.<sup>3</sup>
- Over 60% of Californians agree that apartment complexes should require at least 50% of rental units should be smoke-free.<sup>4</sup>
- Smoking in rental units not only negatively affects the value of the home, it also affects the elderly, children, the disabled, and even pets. A recent study found that dogs in smoking households have a 60% greater risk of developing lung cancer.<sup>5</sup>

### What can be done?

There are several steps you can take locally to make an impact on smoke-free housing in your community:

- Survey: survey the housing community you intend to work with regarding smoking prevalence, knowledge and attitudes regarding tobacco and secondhand smoke.
- Education: educate the housing community on the dangers of secondhand smoke through presentations and events.
- New Policy: work with housing community leaders, as well as the housing management and owners to come to an agreement regarding the smoking policies that are appropriate following the education you have done and the attitudes the community has.
- Implementation: If you can, provide signage and technical assistance to follow up on the policy.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. *Tenure, Household Size, and Age of Householder: 2000*. <[Http://factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov)>

<sup>2</sup> Smokefree Apartment House Registry. *Why are Smoke-Free Tot Lots and Play Areas Needed in Public Housing?* July 2004.

<sup>3</sup> California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. *The Survey of California Adults on Secondhand Smoke*. April 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> American Lung Association Superior Branch. *"Secondhand Smoke and Pets."* 7 March 2004. <[Http://www.smokefreehousing.org](http://www.smokefreehousing.org)>

### Resources for Tenants Affected by Secondhand Smoke

There are four different types of resources you can recommend to tenants who are searching for assistance with secondhand smoke disputes:

#### 1. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Programs

ADR Programs can arrange mediation sessions between those involved in a dispute so that a satisfactory resolution can be achieved. Participation in mediation is voluntary. This is a good beginning step for most smoking-related tenant grievances.

#### 2. Housing and Tenants Rights Organizations

These organizations are designed to protect and advocate for tenants involved in a variety of disputes or problems related to rental living. However, there may be income limitations to qualify for services and due to the overwhelming volume of cases, a secondhand smoke dispute can fall low on the organization's priority list. Additionally, many organizations will not assist tenants with smoking-related grievances without a doctor's note.

#### 3. Certified Lawyer Referral Services

For a small fee, local chapters of the State Bar Association arrange a half-hour consultation with a lawyer to decide whether to bring a case to court.

#### 4. County Health Department Tobacco Control Projects

Each county's tobacco control program may know of additional local resources available to community members that are not mentioned here. (Source: California Legal and Dispute Resolution Services for Tenants and Smokers Injured by Tobacco: A TALC Directory. Available at [www.talc.org](http://www.talc.org))

Stay tuned...More Fact Sheets Are Coming Your Way



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