

Fact Sheet #5: Smoking in Public Places

Tobacco smoke contains more than 3,000 chemicals, 60 of which are known carcinogens.¹

What is Happening?

Tobacco smoke kills thousands of nonsmokers in California every year. It exacerbates or causes major health problems such as cancer and asthma, and costs the state billions of dollars each year in productivity and health care costs.² While smoking is prohibited inside most buildings in California, it is still allowed in fairs, outdoor malls, entryways, outdoor patios, beaches, and other open spaces that have not yet established a local smoke-free policy.

Youth, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with disabilities are the most susceptible to the carcinogenic effects of tobacco smoke. Protection for these groups, as well as all Californians, is vital. Advocates are addressing tobacco smoke in public in two ways: working to get local smoke-free ordinances established and organizing smoke-free events in venues that normally allow smoking.

Why a Smoke-free Event?

A smoke-free event is a great way to establish a smoke-free environment. A smoke-free event can be held almost anywhere: a nightclub with a smoking patio, beach, county fair, community gathering, etc. These events are a way to promote a smoke-free lifestyle in a venue that would not normally be smoke-free.

Smoke-free events stimulate support for smoke-free areas in two ways. First, smoke-free events help to normalize a place or event as smoke-free, making it easier to establish smoke-free ordinances.

Community members can be given a chance to see the benefits of a smoke-free environment first-hand. Secondly, smoke-free events can be used to publicize a smoke-free policy already in place. As many tobacco prevention advocates know, education is a key component to enforcement of a policy.³

Smoke-free Policy Success

Here are some steps you can take to create a local smoke-free policy:

- **Research your community/population.** Find potential allies and know your likely opposition. Partner with decision-makers, community organizations, and invested members of the community.
- **Create a policy.** Show the positive relationship between tobacco prevention and the health of your community. Be sure to involve everyone with a stake in the outcome. Review model policies available from agencies who have been successful.
- **Maintain participation.** Follow up the policy with education. Invest your time and energy in community groups who helped you with the passage of your policy. Provide promotional items and technical assistance as a reward to your allies. Be willing to step outside your scope-of-work to achieve success.

By combining a model smoke-free policy, education, cessation, and enforcement, your community can have the full benefit of a smoke-free environment.⁴

Citations

¹ California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. *Smoke-free Outdoors: For the Health of Our Community, 2003.*

² Ibid.

³ California Youth Advocacy Network. *Networking Forum Teleconference.* 5 February 2004.

⁴ Ibid.

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



California Youth Advocacy Network
Phone: (916) 339-3424
Email: info@cyanonline.org