

SECTION 7: COMMUNICATION

PROMOTING YOUR TOBACCO-FREE POLICY

In order to comply with a policy, people need to be aware of it. Students, staff, parents, and the community are all impacted by a tobacco-free school policy. Therefore, each of these audiences needs to understand the policy. There are many ways to effectively communicate positive messages about the tobacco-free policy. Aim for clear, positive messages that motivate people to comply. Here are some suggestions on ways to thoroughly communicate your policy in order of importance.

- **SIGNAGE:** One of our policy requirements is to post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, athletic facilities, as well as in the school building, school vehicles and buses. We provide these for FREE - so please don't hesitate to ask! See page 20 for information on how to request signs for your school.
- **DISTRICT WEBSITE:** Post the full district policy on the website for anyone to access and view in its entirety. If you'd like to also highlight the tobacco-free policy separately, include an image of one of our tobacco-free signs so that people are familiar with the message.
- **STAFF EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** Discuss the policy at staff meetings and new staff orientations. Provide annual training on tobacco, nicotine and e-cigarette-related school policies for all staff, including teachers, administrators, bus drivers, aides, food service workers, and maintenance staff. 24/7 has a Faculty Training Video and accompanying worksheets that we provide for FREE to any interested school who wants to have an official policy training.
- **HARD COPY OF TOBACCO POLICY:** As part of our policy recommendations, we highly encourage districts to provide students, staff and visitors with a hard copy of the tobacco policy each school year or when visiting so that there can be no claims of ignorance regarding the 100% tobacco-free standards.
- **STUDENT EDUCATION:** Clear expectations help everyone follow the rules. At the start of each school year, during school-wide or grade-level assemblies or in a specific class, all school rules should be reviewed, including policies about tobacco and e-cigarettes. But discussing rules is not the only essential, education about the harmful effects tobacco and nicotine use within the classroom can successfully prevent students from ever starting to use them in the first place. We offer referrals to external education programs on page 35.
- **PARENT LETTERS/CALLS:** Send a letter, email or automated phone call to each parent or guardian explaining the policy, providing the health, academic, and social reasons; outlining the consequences for violators; and requesting support in enforcement with students and visitors. We provide language for this type of communication on pages 21-22.
- **STAFF MEMO OR EMAIL:** Inform school staff – or remind them throughout the year – about the policy and enforcement via an official memo or email. Inform vendors who provide supplies, materials, and services on a regular basis to the school about the policy via an official memo. We provide a memo template on page 23.
- **COMMUNICATE ABOUT VIOLATIONS:** Call or meet with parents if a student violates the policy. Send a letter home with a summary of the policy, details of their student's policy violation, and consequences of this and future violations. If a staff member or visitor violates the policy, meet with them as well with a copy of the policy and hold them accountable to the standards set.

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- **IN-SCHOOL STUDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Ask students to read daily announcements. Involve student groups or clubs in developing and delivering these announcements about the policy.
- **EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:** In just a few seconds, you can announce the policy at athletic events, meetings, concerts and plays. Involve student groups or clubs in developing and delivering these announcements. Include a mention of the tobacco-free campus policy in event bulletins/flyers. Sample messaging for these announcements are provided on page 24.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA:** Social accounts are sometimes the first place school communities go to check for daily updates about their campus. Create brief messages with policy reminders, especially for staff and adults. Consider including information about cessation resources as well as the rules.
- **STUDENT-DESIGNED PUBLICITY:** Ask student groups or classes to design posters, banners and signs to communicate the policy. Consider offering a prize for the best-designed piece that embodies the school's mindset on being 100% tobacco-free.
- **LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE:** Alert your local media outlets of your newly-adopted tobacco-free policy and include quotes from the board, administration and students on how important this policy is for health and wellness. You can even invite them to attend the board meeting where the policy will be officially voted in. Don't forget to let us know too as we'd love to celebrate with you! If you'd like assistance with developing an official press release, this is a service we offer for FREE to all districts that communicate with us about their intent to adopt the policy.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY!

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH VISITORS

Even with signs, written materials, and event announcements, some school visitors may not realize that the school district has a tobacco-free school policy in place. This is why all school staff should be trained to communicate the policy one-on-one to the public. Gentle, positive, and clear messages will let violators know that the policy is in place and that it will be enforced. Knowing how to effectively communicate the policy will go a long way toward relieving stress that school staff may have regarding enforcement and will help to avoid the negative confrontations with parents, workers, and other school visitors.

TIPS FOR VERBALLY COMMUNICATING THE POLICY

- **GENTLE REMINDERS:** Most of the time the person in violation of the policy is unaware that it is in place. This is particularly true if your school district recently strengthened its policy or enforcement of the policy. Politely and firmly let the violator know that the campus or school event – as well as the entire school district – is tobacco-free. Explain that the policy includes all tobacco and nicotine related products, including e-cigarettes.
- **A RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY:** Inform visitors of the reasons for the policy in a positive manner. Let them know that the school or school board enacted the policy to protect students, school staff, and visitors from secondhand smoke, to ensure a safe and positive learning and work environment for students and staff, and to model healthy and positive behaviors for students.
- **RANGE OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:** Make sure that other communication strategies are in place to support verbal messages. For example, visitors to outdoor athletic events should see signs and information in event programs that communicate the policy, as well as hear announcements at the start of the game and during breaks to remind them of the policy.