**Implementation Strategies: Steps to Getting Started\***

**Build tenant support.**

When you’re not sure how tenants feel about a smoke-free policy, and you want their input, start by asking residents about your plan to adopt the policy by using a brief survey. The survey should assess, for example:

* how many residents smoke?
* how many smoke inside their residential unit?
* how many smoke in other areas of the building?
* how many smoke only in the common areas?
* how many are bothered by secondhand smoke?
* how many favor a no-smoking policy?

Asking questions such as “has secondhand smoke from another unit ever bothered you” or “if available, would you prefer to live in a smoke-free environment”, can help you determine what type of policy to implement.

**Communicate widely & involve tenants and staff.**

The success of your smoke-free policy will be relative to how well you communicate the policy with your tenants and staff. This does not have to be complicated, or overly time consuming, but things like including:

* articles in your tenant newsletter;
* holding tenant meetings so opinions can be voiced;
* sending a letter to tenants
* providing adequate signage;
* supplying information on the harmful effects of secondhand and thirdhand smoke;

Key to this strategy is communication. Include tenants and building staff in discussions about the adoption and implementation of the smoke-free housing policy by hearing their ideas.

**Give plenty of notice.**

Notifying residents about your policy well in advance of making it effective isn’t only a good idea—it’s the law. Neglecting to tell both your new and old residents about your smoking policy is a breach of the duty to provide notice.

**Methods for Adopting a Smoke-Free Building Policy**

* **“Phase-In” Method:** Begin having new renters who move into the building sign a smoke-free lease addendum immediately. Announce the policy change to current residents and have them sign a smoke-free lease addendum at the time of their lease renewal.
* **“Quit Date” Method:** Decide what date you would like the building to go smoke free. Give your residents proper notification of the policy change and tell them that they must sign a smoke-free lease addendum if they wish to continue living in the building.

Within either method, you may only be required to give 30 days notice per your lease agreement when implementing a smoke-free policy, but it is recommended that you provide at least 180 days advance warning. This extra time will give those who smoke a chance to adjust their lifestyle to the new policy. Your posted notifications should include the wording that will be in your leases or covenants. Providing poorly worded or incomplete lease provisions in these notices is also considered a breach of duty.

**Have a clearly defined policy with clear implementation dates**

* Be clear on where smoking will be prohibited inside and outside of the building.
* Write these into the lease and lease addendums. Always have the tenant acknowledge the no-smoking clause by initialing the lease or addendum.
* Specify, through written communication, exactly when the new policy will be in place, giving adequate notice between policy notice and implementation. Make sure that every resident is aware.

**Communicate with tenants throughout the implementation process**

After you have reviewed the tenant survey results and made clear decisions about where, when, and how smoking will be prohibited, begin to let your residents know. It’s important to begin communicating with residents both verbally and in writing to give them adequate notice of the upcoming no‐smoking policy. This will give people time to adjust and can improve compliance.

* Send a very positive letter to each resident about the new policy.
* Ensure that all building and maintenance workers are aware of the letters and how to

 respond to questions.

* Request a signed confirmation that residents have received and read the letters.
* Send a copy of the new lease addendum to all residents containing the new no‐smoking policy.
* Provide a summary memo/ Q&A of the new rules.
* Provide a follow‐up letter to those who have not signed the initial letter or the new lease agreement when it is requested.
* Keep all residents informed with regular updates using announcements and postings in common areas; letters addressed to the lease holder, flyers and notices on bulletin boards, in newsletters, and meetings.
* Inform tenants that if they smoke in their units, they will be financially responsible for bringing the unit back to rentable condition.
* Visit the property regularly to perform inspections.

**Offer support by providing resources for quitting.**

Many existing developments offer some type of cessation services (quit smoking support) to their tenants. Look to Breathe DC or your health department, your local hospital or other community organizations for free cessation support. Though you are not asking people to quit smoking with a smoke-free policy, this type of policy provides incentive and support to those who were considering quitting. Providing tenants with local cessation information is a way to show that you care about their well-being.

**Leases**

**Follow the rules.**

With existing buildings, be sure to follow the rules of your lease before adopting new policies. After a lease has been signed by both parties, it cannot be modified without the consent of both of the parties. Therefore, residents who have fixed term leases will be exempt from the smoke-free policies.

If the current lease specifies that changes can occur between lease renewals, then the landlord may implement the policy for all residents according to the lease terms. If there is no clause allowing for lease change between renewals, then the no‐smoking policy can only be applied at the time of lease renewal unless the tenant volunteers to agree to the policy prior to renewal.

The lease also may have a specific provision for changing “house rules” for common areas so that a smoke-free common areas policy could be implemented sooner.

**A note about "grandfathering" smokers.**

In some cases, the landlord may choose to “grandfather” current smokers. This means that they will be allowed to continue to smoke in their units until the tenant vacates the property. This situation is not ideal, as someone, usually a non‐smoker, will be living near the smoker and will continue to be exposed to secondhand smoke after the no‐smoking policy is passed.

**Start with new and renewing tenants.**

When new tenants sign a lease include a clear smoke-free provision in your contract.

**All Buildings**

**Implications for workers and guests.**

Remember, smoke-free policies not only impact residents, but their guests and your employees. When you adopt a smoke-free policy, make it clear that all guests, maintenance workers and staff are prohibited from smoking as well.

**Post signage.**

Signs are important for reminding visitors and work personnel that a no‐smoking policy exists. Therefore, it is important to post signs in the lobby, exterior locations, all common areas and on the grounds.

**Promote your building(s).**

• Promote your smoke‐free building via the web.

• Promote your building’s smoke‐free status in all advertising and with realtors.

• Place signs at the entrance announcing its smoke‐free status.

• Talk about your building at community board and other community meetings.

\*NOTE: The Implementation Strategies: Steps to Getting Started" section was adopted in part from the article "Reasons To Explore Smoke-Free Housing" by the National Center for Healthy Housing, Early Fall 2009