



WORKING WITH EMPLOYEES

A keen understanding of workforce tobacco-use will help you develop a successful tobacco-free initiative. (See Understand Your Community and Facility, Appendix B.) At the outset, employees who see on-campus smoking as a hindrance to quality care will resoundingly support the effort. Staff members who oppose the tobacco-free initiative are less likely to enforce the policy or help patients quit. You will need to lead both supporters and detractors with resolve and understanding.

Your efforts will be more successful if you:

1. **Clearly communicate your intention to become tobacco-free, explaining why.**
2. **Elicit, listen to and respond to employee concerns.**
3. **Support employees who want to quit tobacco.**
4. **Educate employees about the policy and enforce it fairly.**
5. **Develop clear lines of responsibility, providing appropriate training for employees at each level.**
6. **Give employees the tools and training to help patients quit.**
7. **Celebrate employee successes.**
8. **Provide ongoing support and training.**

1. Clearly communicate your intention to become tobacco-free, explaining why.

Inform all employees of your plans early in your process. Smokers need time to get used to the idea of a smoke-free campus. Smokers who want to quit will be more successful if they have time to prepare. Provide employees with information about other hospitals and businesses in your area that have taken similar actions.

Craft a few simple messages that explain why you want to address tobacco-use in your facility, what you hope to accomplish, and your underlying concern for constituents. Key messages to employees may include:

- *"We are developing this policy to provide a healthy and safe environment for employees, patients and visitors and to promote positive health behaviors."*
- *"Policies that discourage smoking can improve our outcomes: Smoking retards wound healing, increases infection rates in surgeries and is the most common cause of poor birth outcomes."*
- *"We are not saying you must quit smoking. But we are saying you cannot use tobacco while you are at work. If you are ready to quit, we want to support your efforts."*
- *Starting (DATE), we will no longer permit use of tobacco products on our campus.*
- *(Name of a trusted manager) will be responsible for this initiative. Please contact her/him if you have suggestions to improve our process or if you have questions or concerns.*

As you discuss this initiative, remember that success stories inspire. Weave them into messages. Look for champions within your institution or at other facilities with strong tobacco-dependence treatment programs. Highlight staff who have quit smoking, motivated others to quit, or improved quality of care in the institution and community by addressing the deadly addiction to smoking.

> **See Appendix C: Sample Announcement**

2. Elicit, listen to and respond to employee concerns.

Allow employees and managers time to express concerns and prepare for changes. Hold discussions with individuals, groups, departments and the public, emphasizing how an addiction to smoking impacts health, safety and recovery.

Tobacco-use policies can raise prickly issues between labor and management. Some labor unions voice concerns that new rules infringe upon member rights. The fact is, there is no constitutional right to smoke, but you have a right to create a tobacco-free environment within your buildings and grounds.^{xxv} Prior to adopting a tobacco ban, some hospitals express fears that the initiative will drive employees to leave the facility or organize a union. Reports from across the country show that such fears are largely unfounded and, in most cases, labor organizations are effective and trusted partners who do not oppose tobacco-free efforts.

It is important that employees who are not ready to quit tobacco are educated about ways to endure their shifts without using tobacco. They also need to know what the rules are about using tobacco while on the clock.

> See *Develop a fair policy, page 4, Enforce your policy, page 8, and Appendix D: Tobacco-Free Policy Template.*

Listen to employee concerns, while moving the policy forward. Successful tobacco-free initiatives engage labor and management as partners, frame smoking as a health and safety issue, support tobacco-users who want to quit and enforce the rules fairly with all employees and managers.

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> See *Appendix F: Frequently-Asked Questions*

3. Support employees who want to quit tobacco.

Staff members who smoke may be more likely to oppose the tobacco-free campus initiative and less likely to help patients quit. Show them you understand the challenges they face by investing in support that can help them quit. By providing quitting help prior to implementing a tobacco-free policy, you can prepare employees for the change and begin honing a cessation delivery system for patients.

The most effective tobacco-dependence treatments include counseling or coaching, cessation medications and social support.^{xxiii} Structure your tobacco-cessation benefits and services, including your employee assistance program, to:

- Cover counseling services, including telephone, group and individual counseling
- Offer several counseling sessions over a period of several weeks
- Offer the FDA-approved medications, including bupropion, varenicline, and prescription and over-the-counter nicotine-replacement medication,

Design a benefit that makes it easier for tobacco-users to successfully quit:

- Require employees to pay no more than the standard co-payment. Data show that smokers are much more likely to try to quit when no co-payment is required.
- Provide at least two courses of treatment per year.
- Offer a variety of options for counseling and medications.
- Provide tobacco-dependence treatment for spouses, significant others and dependents.

Consider tobacco-dependence treatment an investment. Kaiser Permanente of Northern California subsidizes tobacco-dependence treatment because it determined that the costs of smoking are much greater than the costs of encouraging quit attempts. Employees and members enrolled in an approved tobacco-dependence treatment program can obtain cessation medications for a standard co-payment.^{xxiv}

In addition to the assistance you provide, be sure to tell employees about 1-800-QUIT NOW, a national portal to a quit line in your state. To learn what your state quit line offers, visit <http://1800quitnow.cancer.gov/>

4. Educate employees about the policy and enforce it fairly.

Share the policy with employees as early as possible in multiple forms. Be sure employees understand how the policy will impact them, including:

- Stages of implementation
- Their role in enforcement
- Consequences for not complying with the policy
- How the policy fits with treatment protocols
- Ways to join planning efforts
- Trainings available about the policy
- Measures and celebrations of successes
- Who to speak with about concerns or problems

Provide employees with copies of the policy as soon as it is available. Take the opportunity to educate employees of the policy through meetings, internal communications, banners and signs.

5. Develop clear lines of responsibility, providing appropriate training for employees at each level.

In many hospitals, the entire staff is expected to educate patients, co-workers and visitors about the tobacco-use policy. Although hospital personnel are accustomed to instructing patients on how to take care of themselves, they sometimes feel awkward talking about tobacco-use. Equip employees with a clear understanding of your tobacco-use policy and how it applies differently to co-workers, patients and visitors.

Intake staff, human resources, supervisors and security need training to perform particular roles:

- Intake staff informs all patients of the tobacco-use policy, its purpose, the assistance that will be available and the consequences of unauthorized smoking.
- The human resources department educates all job applicants and new employees about the policy.
- Supervisors consistently follow procedures in working with those who violate the policy.
- Security staff intervenes with visitors in the rare instances that simple education is not enough.

Your tobacco-free policy is designed to provide a safe and healthy environment and model healthy behaviors. As you enforce the policy, provide as much help as possible.

Make sure those most likely to have contact with other employees and visitors are trained in helpful, positive approaches to enforcing the policy. This could include greeters or security staff stationed near exits or entrances. They will need to learn to respectfully escort tobacco-users from the campus and invite them to return when they have finished smoking.

Your tobacco-free policy is designed to provide a safe and healthy environment and model healthy behaviors. As you enforce the policy, provide as much help as possible. Educate people about the policy. As appropriate, offer symptom relief for tobacco-users during their stay, encourage tobacco-users to quit when they are ready or direct visitors to places where they are allowed to smoke. Keep discussions about the tobacco-use policy brief and non-confrontational.

> See Appendix K: Enforcement Scripts

6. Give employees the tools and training to help patients quit.

Every tobacco-user who steps into your hospital presents a “teachable moment.”^{xxiv} Most smokers want to quit.^{xxvi} And patients who are in the hospital because of tobacco-related illness can be particularly motivated to break their addiction.^{xxvii}

Make sure staff members understand how they fit into a cohesive health and safety strategy that addresses patient tobacco-use. Train clinicians on the protocols, systems, coaching, and medications that can help patients begin the quitting process. A variety of live or on-line trainings in tobacco-dependence treatment is available for different types of clinicians. In addition to formal trainings, consider ways to share information in regular meetings, in-services, and through Grand Rounds.

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Regardless of how you treat tobacco-dependence, patients are more likely to remain abstinent if they have community support. Provide hospital staff with information about community resources, including the telephone quit line, which can be reached by calling 1-800-QUIT NOW.

> *See Working with Patients, page 15.*

7. Celebrate employee successes.

Some things are worth celebrating: health, safety, clean air. New systems that lead to excellence. New partners that improve health. A person’s first day without tobacco.

Look for ways to celebrate employees who do battle with their nicotine addiction and those who help create and sustain a tobacco-free campus. Share good news about improved outcomes for your facility.

Consider how celebration can shift the culture from turning a blind eye to smoking to honoring those who assist the people who confront their gripping addiction.

8. Provide ongoing support and training.

Tobacco-use and dependence is a chronic issue you will need to address on an ongoing basis. Employees who quit using tobacco for a time, then relapse, will need support to quit again. New employees will need training on how to address tobacco-use at your facility. Finally, as you evaluate your process for addressing tobacco, you may need to change elements of your work. Such changes will require additional training.