POLICY BRIEF

Promoting Health and Cost Control in States:

How States Can Improve Community Health & Well-being Through Policy Change

Smoke-free Laws

Background

Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke are leading causes of preventable death in the United States. Secondhand smoke causes approximately 7,330 deaths from lung cancer and 33,950 deaths from heart disease each year.[1] Policies that reduce smoking protect the health of smokers and non-smokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke. One effective strategy is smoke-free policies that prohibit smoking in designated areas. Smoke-free policies are designed to improve public health by reducing secondhand smoke, reducing tobacco use, encouraging smokers to quit, reducing the initiation of tobacco use, and reducing tobacco-related morbidity.[2]

KEY TAKEAWAYS

What are Smoke-free Air Laws?

- Smoke-free air laws prohibit smoking in designated spaces to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke. These policies can apply to indoor areas, outdoor areas, and/or multi-unit housing

How do Smoke Free Air Laws Improve Health?

- Smoke-free policies decrease tobacco use, exposure to secondhand smoke, smoking-related illnesses and mortality.

What is the Economic Impact of Smoke-free Air Laws?

- Smoke-free policies can reduce secondhand smoke exposure and related medical expenditures.

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What States Can Do

States can implement or enhance existing smoke-free laws. There are three types of smoke-free policies: 1) those for indoor areas, 2) those for outdoor areas, and 3) those for multi-unit housing facilities. Indoor smoke-free policies cover workplaces, restaurants, bars, and designated areas. Comprehensive indoor smoke-free laws cover all indoor areas of private workplaces, including restaurants and bars, with no exception. Most states have some form of smoke-free indoor laws.[3] However, only about half the states and the District of Columbia have comprehensive smoke-free laws. States can enhance their existing indoor smoke-free policies by enacting comprehensive smoke-free laws to prohibit smoking in all indoor areas and expand policies to include e-cigarettes and marijuana.

Smoke-free policies for outdoor areas cover worksite property and outdoor public areas, such as parks and beaches.[4] These policies are typically enacted at a local level. Currently, no states have enacted outdoor smoke-free policies.[5]

Smoke-free policies for multi-unit housing cover smoking in apartments, duplexes, and similar residences. Federal law prohibits smoking in federally-assisted housing.[6] States can expand smoke-free areas beyond individual units to include common and adjacent outdoor areas. However, multi-unit smoke-free laws need to be implemented with an understanding of the individuals that are most impacted by them, as smoke free policies have the potential to jeopardize stable housing for low-income people. They should be enforced in a way to avoid putting peoples' housing at risk. States can help residents adjust to the new laws by providing sufficient opportunities and proper resources to quit smoking.

Smoke-Free Policy	Areas Covered	Policy Status
Indoor	• Workplace • Restaurants • Bars	• 37 states and D.C. have indoor smoke-free laws. • 28 states and D.C. have comprehensive smoke-free laws.
Outdoor	• Workplace property • Public areas • Parks • Beaches	• No states have enacted outdoor smoke-free policies. • These policies are enacted at a local level
Multi-unit Housing	• Apartments • Duplexes • Subsidized housing • Common areas • Adjacent outdoor areas	• 15 states restrict smoking in common areas of government-owned multi-unit housing facilities. • 12 states prohibit or restrict smoking in common areas of privately-owned housing facilities.

Smoke-Free Air Laws Can Improve the Health of Smokers and Those Exposed to Second-Hand Smoke

Tobacco-use and exposure to secondhand smoke are responsible for many chronic diseases, such as cancer, cardiac diseases, and respiratory illnesses, among others.[1] Smoke-free laws have been shown to decrease smoking, encourage smoking cessation and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.[7,8,9] As a result, these laws reduce tobacco-related illnesses and mortality, and hospitalizations associated with cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.[10,11] For example, in 2010, Wisconsin implemented an indoor smoke-free law that applies to enclosed places of employment and enclosed public spaces.[12] Within three to six months, non-smoking bar workers experienced a significant improvement in respiratory symptoms caused by secondhand smoke.[13]

Smoke-Free Air Laws Can Reduce Tobacco-Related Illnesses and Their Related Healthcare Costs

Smoking-related diseases cost the United States more than $300 billion annually.[14,15] By decreasing tobacco-related illnesses, smoke-free policies can save states millions of dollars in medical expenses. For example, one year after Florida implemented a smoke-free indoor-air policy, the state saved nearly seven million dollars in averted medical costs.[16]

Implementing smoke free policies in multi-unit housing can save millions of dollars for states. It is estimated that implementing smoke-free policies in public housing could save $496.82 million per year, including $310 million in averted health costs, $133.77 million in renovation expenses, and $52.57 million in smoking-attributable fire losses.[17] And, research has also shown that enforcing smoke-free air laws in outdoor areas does not create a significant burden on staff or budgets.[18]

Economic Impact of Smoke-Free Policies

Indoor	Save $0.15 million to $4.8 million per 100,000 people in state.
Outdoor	No increase in public expenditure.
Multiunit Housing	Save the nation $500 million per year in state healthcare costs.

Interested in learning more about Smoke-Free Laws and other evidence-based policies? Visit the PHACCS website *to read the full report and other policy briefs for our 13 recommended policies.*

COMMUNICATING THE IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT OF SMOKE-FREE AIR LAWS

Policymakers

- Enacting or expanding smoke-free laws for indoor and outdoor areas, and multi-unit housing can improve health outcomes for residents and reduce healthcare costs related to smoking.
- States have the authority to expand current smoke-free laws to include e-cigarettes and marijuana.
- Ensuring that smoke-free air laws do not preempt local law allows municipalities to enhance these policies as needed.

Public Health Professionals

- Enacting smoke-free policies decreases smoking behavior, reduces exposure to secondhand smoke, and improves health outcomes for smokers and non-smokers.
- Mandating smoke-free environments maximize health benefits, minimize confusion, and facilitate compliance.
- Enforcement of smoke-free air laws should be coupled with resources for smoking-cessation programs to help smokers quit and adjust to new policies.

Businesses Owners

- Small business owners can protect employees and customers from secondhand smoke by prohibiting indoor and outdoor smoking on business property even in the absence of state or local restrictions.
- Indoor smoke-free policies can improve employees' health, reduce days missed due to illness and increase overall productivity.
- Smoke-free air laws have been shown to have no detrimental effect on local businesses and have had a neutral or positive economic impact.

Endnotes

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