

FOR HUMAN RESOURCES STAFF: Frequently Asked Questions Tobacco-Free Campus Policy



Why should our agency adopt a tobacco-free campus policy?

Smoking costs the state over \$2 billion in annual health care costs each year. Employees exposed to secondhand smoke on the job are 12—19% more likely to get lung cancer, and at a 25—35% increased risk of heart attack. Tobacco users miss 2.3 more days of work per year due to sickness compared to non-tobacco users, and employees who take four 10-minute breaks a day to smoke actually work about one month less per year than workers who don't take smoking breaks. Additionally, nonsmoking employees can receive workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, disability benefits, and other settlements based upon their exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace. Finally, going tobacco-free reduces liability and potential property damage — in 2012 smoking caused 16 fires in non-residential structures—resulting in \$383,265 in property damage.

Does an employer have the authority to implement and enforce a tobacco-free campus policy?

Employers are free to set policies and implement restrictions that are necessary to provide a safe and healthy working environment. Courts have consistently upheld the constitutionality of policies that restrict or prohibit smoking in the workplace.

Does the policy apply to other tobacco products besides cigarettes?

Yes. The policy prohibits use of all tobacco products including smokeless tobacco, cigars, pipes, electronic cigarettes, and other tobacco products.

Why should this policy cover smokeless tobacco?

There is no safe tobacco product. Smokeless tobacco has been proven harmful and addictive. Additionally, the spitting involved with smokeless products is unsanitary and a possible vehicle of disease.

Why should this policy cover e-cigarettes?

The FDA considers e-cigarettes a tobacco product, not a way to quit smoking. E-cigarettes are a delivery system for nicotine, which is a highly addictive substance; therefore, electronic cigarettes are included as an "other tobacco product" in this policy.

Does the policy prohibit employees from bringing cigarettes or other tobacco products to work?

No. The policy prohibits the USE of tobacco products on agency property.

Are employees allowed to smoke in their car while it's parked on agency property?

No. The policy prohibits smoking and tobacco use on ALL agency property, which includes inside parked and moving vehicles.

Where do employees go to smoke and when?

During the workday, employees who smoke should only be allowed to smoke off site of the campus, and only during designated break or lunch times. Employees who smoke should not be allowed to take more breaks than allowed by the agency or more than non-smoking employees of the agency.

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What do we do if we have a smoking shelter on our property?

There should be no smoking-designated areas or shelters on campus. It is recommended that if a smoking shelter already exists it should be dismantled.

How will the policy be implemented in a shared or leased space?

Facilities that are not wholly owned by your agency, or that are shared spaces, are to be tobacco free in the areas specifically under the agency's control, both indoor and outdoor. Recommendations are to approach the other organization(s) in the shared space about adopting the policy at the same time.

What is an example of an adjacent property and why is this important?

Adjacent property is considered that which is directly across or beside the tobacco-free campus. It is important to include a statement in your policy discouraging the use of tobacco products by your employees on adjacent properties so as not to create ill will among neighboring businesses.

What do we do if employees become disgruntled/threaten to quit?

This has been a common concern among employers who are implementing new tobacco-free policies, especially in restaurants. It is very important to bring tobacco using employees to the table to hear their point of view. The DHEC Tobacco Control and Prevention staff has worked with hundreds of businesses and schools across South Carolina to effectively address this common concern. They can work with your team to engage and communicate with employees who use tobacco to work through challenges that may arise in implementing a tobacco-free campus policy.

What types of resources are available for employees who want to quit?

For those employees who are ready to quit, there are treatments available:

- Quit for Life Program (1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE) – covered state employees and their dependents are eligible to receive telephone or online coaching, nicotine replacement therapy products such as patches, gum, or lozenges, and no/low cost prescription medicines may also be available depending on coverage. To learn specifics of the state employee cessation benefit, contact PEBA at 803-734-0678 or visit the [PEBA website](#) and click on the “Tobacco Cessation” icon on the right.
- Visit the [Quit for Life website for SC State Health Plan](#) to enroll in the Quit for Life program
- Employees can find additional cessation benefit information in the Insurance Benefits Guide or by visiting www.eip.sc.gov.

Is help available to those who aren't employed with our agency (e.g., clients, contractors)?

Yes. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) offers treatment and resources to all residents of South Carolina, as well as links to helpful tools for anyone through the S.C. Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or www.scdhec.gov/quitforkeeps.

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How do we let contractors know about our policy?

Information about the tobacco-free campus policy should be included in any contract language. Additionally, signs should be strategically placed to inform all contractors, visitors and guests of the policy.

How will we cover the costs of reprinting employee handbooks or creating signs?

The DHEC Tobacco Control and Prevention Division has funding available to help South Carolina cabinet agencies print "A Healthier State" resources, including tobacco-free campus signage and educational materials.