



Tobacco Prevention and Cessation

Comprehensive Tobacco-Free
Worksite Policy

Comprehensive Tobacco-Free Worksite Policy

Employers can provide a safe and healthy worksite by providing tobacco-free work environments and offering employees who use tobacco various cessation resources. **Tobacco-free** includes all burned tobacco products, electronic nicotine delivery systems (e-cigarettes/vaping or novel/emerging tobacco products), hookahs, marijuana, and smokeless tobacco. Use this guide to create a new tobacco-free policy or modify an existing policy. Existing tobacco-free policies should be reviewed periodically to ensure they follow best practices in tobacco control.

Comprehensive tobacco-free policies in the worksite can help protect all your employees from the health dangers of secondhand smoke exposure, as well as encourage people who use tobacco to make a plan to quit. Research regarding tobacco-free policies shows support for these policies from both people who use tobacco and those who don't. ⁽¹⁾

The information provided in this document, including the template policy provided, is intended to provide examples of policies, resources, and best practices to support your employees. It is not a substitute for legal advice and is not intended to address all your employees' legal rights, your responsibilities as an employer, or the legal implications of establishing a tobacco cessation or other worksite wellness program. For information on legal rights and responsibilities, federal and state anti-discrimination laws, and other laws or local ordinances that may affect your worksite or wellness programs, please consult with your legal counsel.

Steps to Going 100% Tobacco-Free

1. Engage stakeholders

Gather stakeholders together to form a workgroup to tailor, implement, and promote the policy. Stakeholders should include people across multiple departments, such as senior leadership, human resources, legal, wellness, employees, security, building/grounds maintenance, and communications. Please see the table on page 11 for more information about creating a stakeholder group.

2. Survey the worksite for knowledge and readiness to change

Use a survey to conduct an analysis of the current worksite to determine the level of knowledge and readiness to change on tobacco-related issues. The survey results should provide information on the level of support for a tobacco-free worksite, the percentage of people who use tobacco (tobacco prevalence) and their concerns, the level of interest in quitting, the level of interest in cessation products and services, and any other perceived issues. Use the results of the survey to predict challenges and develop strategies to address each challenge. This step can also help with choosing a date your new policy will take effect.

Recognize that messaging about tobacco prevention and cessation may feel stigmatizing to some people. This may be especially true for those who have a condition or are at risk for a condition that has been linked to tobacco use.

3. Build cessation resources

Offering a comprehensive tobacco cessation benefit and cessation program might require negotiation with your health plan(s) and providers to ensure your employees receive evidence-based programs with no out-of-pocket costs. The bottom line is a comprehensive tobacco cessation benefit should include a variety of no-cost options so that the person who uses tobacco can choose what works best for them.

Components of a comprehensive tobacco cessation benefit should include:

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR CESSATION

Any financial incentives should not be tied to health insurance and should be for participation, not a required behavioral change. Incentives have been found to be minimally effective, so consider the pros and cons before implementing.⁽³⁾

- Over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) with no out-of-pocket costs, including formats such as nicotine patches, gums, lozenges, nasal sprays, and oral inhalers.
- Prescription non-nicotine cessation medications (Bupropion SR and Varenicline) from a health care provider with no out-of-pocket costs
- Access to tobacco cessation counseling (group, individual, or telephone quitline) with no out-of-pocket costs.

Counseling should include:

- Proactive sessions (follow-up counseling calls initiated by a counselor/coach)
- Cessation incentives for quit attempts using counseling or adherence to FDA-approved cessation medications
- At least four counseling sessions of at least 10 minutes each

WHAT ABOUT “SKIN IN THE GAME?”

“Skin in the game” – or out-of-pocket costs – for cessation programs and medications dramatically reduces utilization of these programs and services, which decreases overall effectiveness of tobacco cessation practices. ⁽⁴⁾

Pull together cessation resources available to your employees through health plan offerings or Employee Assistance Programs, CDC’s 1-800-QUIT-NOW hotline for guidance and program referrals, or research what is available through free, state-based quitlines. On-site programs like the American Cancer Society Freshstart® program can also be offered in worksites with a higher concentration of people who use tobacco.

Workplace wellness programs, including tobacco cessation programs, may be subject to various federal laws depending on how the program is structured, including ERISA, COBRA, and HIPAA. Consult with your legal counsel when structuring these programs to ensure that you understand and can adhere to all applicable standards, including nondiscrimination requirements.

4. Craft a new comprehensive tobacco-free worksite policy

Develop a tobacco-free worksite policy that reflects recommendations from the workgroup and is based on outreach and evidence-based research. Choose a date when the new policy will go live, and build an implementation plan to support the policy. The implementation plan should include communications and a timeline. (See the appendices for a customizable example of a tobacco-free policy and a timeline for implementation.)

5. Announce the new policy and prepare for the launch

Before announcing the new policy to employees, inform senior leadership and mid-level managers about the immediate steps they should take to implement the policy, to communicate the information to staff, and which key messages they should emphasize to employees.

Next, let employees know that a new policy is coming soon, including the rationale for the policy, the health risks of smoking and other tobacco use, a timeline for the implementation of the policy, and cessation resources available for those who want to make a plan to quit tobacco. Ensure appropriate systems are in place to monitor and respond to feedback from managers and staff throughout the implementation process.

Finalize cessation offerings and include them in your communications plan so that people who use tobacco have plenty of time to take advantage of the available resources before the new policy goes into effect.

Make sure all leaders and managers are trained on how they can support employees' efforts to make a plan to quit, and that any logistical or administrative changes are in place before the policy goes into effect (e.g., creation of signs or door clings, and inclusion of the policy in employee handbooks and onboarding materials)

Prepare for environmental changes that must take place for the policy to go into effect (e.g., making sure that no tobacco will be sold on site, removing or repurposing ashtrays and cigarette butt receptacles, and planning for removal of "smoking shelters" from company premises).

6. Implement new policy, ensuring promotion and compliance across the worksite

Formally announce the implementation of the tobacco-free policy. Hold a high-profile event or promotional activity to celebrate the first day, if possible.

On the first day, prominently display signs and make visitors aware of the policy. Post "no smoking, no e-cigarette use, no tobacco" signs in high-traffic areas, promote the new policy on internal and public-facing websites, and announce the changes on social media channels.

When employees are educated about the tobacco-free policy, including the rationale behind it, tobacco-free policies are typically self-enforcing. Even so, established enforcement as part of the policy provides a process to deal fairly with violations. Enforcement can and should include non-confrontational approaches. Treat violations of the written tobacco-free policy in the same way as violations of other organization policies. ⁽²⁾

7. Monitor and evaluate policy

Use any tracking data available through the reporting process and/or tracking provided by the tobacco-free policy champions, by a survey administered annually (see page 15 for ideas), or through word-of-mouth to evaluate the policy.

Consider modifying the communications plan and tobacco cessation resources, if applicable. Continue the communications campaign, provide messages that promote a tobacco-free lifestyle, thank employees, visitors, and contractors for their support and efforts to make the tobacco-free policy a reality, and share information about the various types of cessation assistance available.

Continue to monitor and respond to feedback from employees and management. Keep up to date on cessation programs and services in case you need to adjust your promotional plan. If tobacco prevalence data is readily available from a health reimbursement account or through the worksite health plan, track it to see the impact of tobacco-free policies and programs.

Clarify policy provisions and adjust implementation and enforcement procedures as necessary, based on results from the monitoring process. Review the written tobacco-free policy for updates as needed.

Tobacco-Free Policy Stakeholders*

Select stakeholders who are **patient, friendly, and have a sincere desire to help**. Everyone acting in this role should be encouraged to exemplify these characteristics when serving as tobacco-free policy champions.

Review the comprehensive tobacco-free worksite policy, including whom it covers, locations covered by the policy, and forms of tobacco covered by the policy. Educate the team on the different types of tobacco products covered under the policy.

Review all cessation resources available to people who use tobacco, including programs (e.g., telephone, group, web-based, text, apps) and cessation medication benefits. Resources should be provided, regardless of health insurance coverage or if the person is employed at the worksite. Have this information **ready to hand out**, too.

Identify non-confrontational ways of approaching people who use tobacco in violation of the policy. For example: *“Hi. We updated our tobacco policy earlier this year, and it now includes vaping. I’ll have to ask you to not use the device on the premises. We appreciate your cooperation. Would you like any information about the programs and services available to help you quit?”*

If possible, provide a way of **tracking violations after they occur**. Data to track might include the violator’s relationship to the worksite (employee, visitor, or contractor), the date/time/location of the occurrence, the type of product being used, and information on how the request to stop smoking/vaping/using tobacco was received. Use this information for training tobacco-free policy stakeholders, cessation resources planning, communications with employees, policy evaluation, and other needs as they occur.

*Adapted from the University of Kentucky’s tobacco policy ambassadors program implemented at their campuses and medical center

A template for a tobacco-free policy is included below to help you craft a new policy or review existing policy and make updates as necessary. Tips for using the template:

- Use the template below to create a new comprehensive tobacco-free policy for your worksite.
- If you already have an existing tobacco-free policy in place, you can use the template below as a guide to ensure that it is up to date with American Cancer Society recommendations.
- All items in *[italics]* should be customized to fit your worksite's policy preferences.

An Example Policy Template

PURPOSE

[Worksite name] is committed to providing a safe and healthy worksite environment free of exposure to secondhand smoke out of concern for employee health and to helping to influence health care costs and business costs related to tobacco use. The purpose of this policy is to explain the tobacco-free policy and expectations and provide resources for those wanting to make a plan to quit tobacco.

POLICY

Because we recognize the hazards caused by exposure to secondhand smoke, as well as the life-threatening diseases linked to the use of all forms of tobacco, it shall be the policy of *[worksite name]*, effective *[DATE]*, to provide a tobacco-free environment for all *[employees, visitors, and contractors]*. This policy includes all burned tobacco products, electronic nicotine delivery systems (e-cigarettes/vaping or novel/emerging tobacco products), hookahs, marijuana, and smokeless tobacco. Use this guide to create a new tobacco-free policy or modify an existing policy.

This policy covers all property, *[owned or leased]*. This includes *[indoors, outdoors, and company-owned or leased vehicles]*.

This policy applies to all employees and non-employee visitors on the worksite premises.

TOBACCO CESSATION SUPPORT

Resources only available to employees *[and their dependents]*

As part of this policy, *[worksite name]* provides tobacco cessation support for employees *[and their dependents]* who want to make a plan to quit. Eligibility for programs and resources might depend on health insurance coverage. Please visit *[give website address]* or contact *[name/department, email address, phone number]* *[phone number]* for more information.

Resources available to all tobacco users, including visitors and contractors**

State quitline – Uninsured employees, visitors, and contractors can call 1-800-QUIT-NOW to connect with their state quitline. The quitlines can offer information on making a quit attempt, and some offer telephone coaching/counseling for those who qualify.

Mobile options – Smokefree.gov provides several options for those wanting to use a mobile device when quitting. Quit Guide, which was designed for adults, tracks cravings, moods, slips, and smoke-free progress. quitSTART uses the information entered into the app by people who use tobacco to provide tailored tips, inspiration, and challenges to help them quit. quitSTART was designed for teens, but adults can use it, too. SmokefreeTXT is a texting service available to a variety of audiences, including veterans, women who are pregnant, and teens. The general and veterans' programs are available in both English and Spanish.

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Customize these sections based on the promotional plan of the new/updated policy.

- Employees will be informed of the tobacco-free worksite policy and cessation resources through signs posted in *[worksite name]* *[facilities and vehicles, newsletters, inserts in pay envelopes, the employee manual, email, new-hire orientation, and training provided by their supervisors]*.
- Visitors will be informed of the tobacco-free worksite policy through *[signs]*, and *[it will be explained by their hosts]*. The policy will also be on *[worksite name's]* website.
- Contractors will be informed of the tobacco-free worksite policy through signs, and the policy will be included in the binding contract.

RESPECT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Tobacco-free worksite policy compliance is the responsibility of all *[employees, visitors, and contractors]*. Employees are encouraged to educate others about the policy in a non-confrontational and helpful way. If the employee is uncomfortable approaching violators of the policy, they should report violations by calling *[phone number]* or emailing *[email address]*. Anyone reported for a violation will be educated on the policy and provided tobacco cessation resources. Repeated violations of the policy may be handled through the standard disciplinary procedures.

Suggested Planning Timeline for Policy Implementation

Below is a six-month timeline for the implementation of a comprehensive tobacco-free worksite policy. This timeline can be customized to meet the needs of your worksite.

ACTION	MONTH						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Assign overall responsibility to a respected manager to coordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive 100% tobacco-free worksite policy.							
Form a workgroup to coordinate and implement the policy.							
Conduct an analysis of the current situation and assess employee knowledge and readiness to change through a survey and outreach.							
Use the results of the survey and outreach to predict challenges and develop strategies to address each challenge.							
Develop a policy that reflects recommendations from the workgroup and is based on research and outreach.							
Develop an overall implementation plan to support the policy, including a communications plan and timeline.							
Gather information about cessation support programs and resources currently available to employees. If needed, look for other programs to ensure a comprehensive cessation benefit is available to those trying to quit. Consider working with your company’s insurance provider(s) to offer tobacco cessation products and services (e.g., nicotine replacement therapy and counseling) to employees at no cost. For worksites with a higher concentration of people who use tobacco, consider offering the American Cancer Society Freshstart program on site.							

ACTION	MONTH						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Secure approval of senior leadership for the policy and implementation plan.							
Before announcing the new policy to all staff, meet with senior leaders and mid-level managers and inform them of the following: - What immediate steps they should take to implement the policy - How information will be communicated to employees (e.g., signage, employee letters) - What is their responsibility (e.g., to ensure that policy requirements are met) - What key messages they should emphasize to employees							
Announce the new policy and the timeline for implementation to employees.							
Ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to monitor and respond to feedback from managers and employees throughout the implementation process.							
Implement the communications plan. Messages should include: - Rationale for the policy - Health harms of tobacco and exposure to secondhand smoke - Timeline for implementation of the policy - Types of cessation assistance and their availability							
Finalize plans to address employees' cessation needs.							
Plan a high-profile event or promotional activity, such as an employee health day, to celebrate the implementation of the tobacco-free policy. Engage top management and possibly political figures and/or the media.							
Prepare for environmental changes that must take place for the policy to go into effect (e.g., make sure that no tobacco will be sold on site, that ashtrays and cigarette-butt receptacles will be removed or							

ACTION	MONTH						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
repurposed, and plan for removal of “smoking shelters” from company premises).							
Train or brief managers on - How they can support employee efforts to quit - Respect and accountability of the policy and how to report violations - Logistical and administrative changes that will take place as a result of the implementation of the policy (e.g., posting of signs, the inclusion of the policy in employee manuals/handbooks)							
Develop signs and communications materials to use when the policy goes into effect. Sign text and imagery may include: - “No Smoking/No E-cigarette Use/No Tobacco.” - “This is a tobacco-free worksite.” - “This company is proud to be tobacco-free.” - “This company and these grounds are tobacco-free.” Refrain from using cigarette and/or tobacco product images or tobacco-related paraphernalia on your signage. Research shows these types of images might increase the urge to smoke in those trying to quit.							
Make sure that job postings for new staff and new employee orientation materials include the tobacco-free worksite policy.							
Formally announce the implementation of the policy. Hold a high-profile event or promotional activity to celebrate the first day if possible.							
Beginning on the first day, prominently display signs and make visitors to the worksite aware of the policy (e.g., on visitor badges).							
Remove ashtrays and cigarette butt receptacles. If receptacles can’t be removed, repurpose them. Make sure no tobacco is sold on the premises. If implementing a 100% tobacco-free worksite policy, eliminate “smoking shelters” from company premises.							

ACTION	MONTH						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Continue communications campaign, providing messages that promote a tobacco-free lifestyle, thanking employees for their support and efforts to make the tobacco-free policy a reality, and informing them of the types of cessation assistance available.							
Continue to monitor and respond to input and feedback from employees and management. Specifically monitor the following: - Implementation and enforcement process (i.e., identify any areas of non-compliance or confusion and make sure the policy is being applied in an equitable manner) - Use of cessation services and products offered by the company							
Clarify policy provisions and adjust implementation and enforcement procedures as necessary, based on results from the monitoring process.							

Survey Ideas for Pre- and Post-Policy Implementation**

Surveying employees before implementing a new or updated 100% tobacco-free worksite policy is a great way to determine if there are any problems with your communication plan, anticipate challenges, and solve them before launch. Surveying employees after implementation can help you understand what's working and where improvements might need to be made.

Recognize that messaging about tobacco prevention and cessation may feel stigmatizing to some people. This may be especially true for those who have a condition or are at risk for a condition that has been linked to tobacco use.

Before surveys are created and distributed, consider ethical measures to protect civil rights, confidentiality, and rights for any medically disabled employees. If available, consult with your worksite's privacy officer or human resources personnel before creating or distributing any survey.

Be sure that procedures are in place to protect the confidentiality and privacy of employees. Surveys should be collected anonymously, and employees' privacy should be protected while managing data from the surveys and reporting results. For more considerations on surveying employees, please visit the [CDC's webpage on Assessment Tools](#).

Examples of worksite surveys include:

- https://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/NCHHealthSmartTlkt/1_docs/quit_now/QN_AppE%20SupportSurvey.pdf
- <https://www.ptcc-cfc.on.ca/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=373111> Survey starts on page 14.

*** Inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement by the American Cancer Society.*

References

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