

Talking to your Residents about HUD's Smoke-Free Rule

A Guide for Minnesota's Public Housing Providers

Helping your residents to understand the 'who', 'what', 'how', and 'why' of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) new smoke-free public housing rule is key to successful policy implementation. Here are some helpful tips and phrases you can use when talking to your residents about going smoke free.

Explain What the Rule Is

When explaining HUD's smoke-free rule, be sure to include the following details:



- The rule restricts the use of prohibited tobacco products including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and hookah.
- Use of these products is not allowed anywhere inside public housing buildings including individual units, common areas, offices, or within 25 feet of the building(s). Individual public housing agencies (PHAs) have the ability to prohibit additional tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes, and to prohibit use in additional areas such as playgrounds or the entire property.

Here's an example of how you can explain what the rule is to your residents:

To provide a safer, healthier community for residents and guests, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development has decided to make all public housing, including **[building/property name]** completely smoke free. This means that use of prohibited tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, and hookah) will not be allowed in individual units, common areas, offices, or within 25 feet of the building(s) **[if applicable, list additional prohibited tobacco products or prohibited areas]**. All residents, guests, and staff will be required to follow this rule. A violation of the smoke-free rule will be considered a violation of the lease.

Explain Who the Rule Will Impact

The rule will apply to and benefit everyone who lives in, works in, or visits public housing.

Explain How the Rule Will Go Into Effect

When explaining how the HUD smoke-free rule will go into effect, be sure to include the following details:

- When will the rule go into effect at your building? Remember that all public housing must implement a policy by July 30, 2018.
- How will the rule be put in place? PHAs can choose to implement the rule with a smoke-free lease addendum or a House Rules change.
- Who can residents contact if they would like to quit smoking?

Here's an example of how you can explain the implementation process using a smoke-free lease addendum.

“The new policy will go into effect at our building on **[insert implementation date]**. This means that beginning on that date, all residents will be required to sign a smoke-free lease addendum during their recertification. We anticipate the transition to becoming a smoke-free building to be completed by **[date all residents will have signed smoke-free lease addendum]**. You may still smell smoke in the building until that time. Management will post signs around the building to remind residents and guests of the rule. Management will enforce the rule by **[insert enforcement guidelines here]**. This rule doesn’t require anyone to quit smoking but remember that if you would like to quit, there is a free program called QUITPLAN® Services that can help you **[provide residents with free brochures, etc.]**”

Here’s an example of how you can explain the implementation process using a House Rules change.

“The new policy will be incorporated into our House Rules and will go into effect at our building for all residents on **[date]**. Residents will be required to sign the House Rules prior to this date. Management will post signs around the building to remind residents and guests of the rule. Management will enforce the rule by **[insert enforcement guidelines here]**. This rule doesn’t require anyone to quit smoking but remember that if you would like to quit, there is a free program called QUITPLAN® Services that can help you **[provide residents with free brochures, etc.]**”

Explain Why the Rule was Made

Here are some ways to explain why HUD made the rule.

- The rule will lead to health benefits for our residents and staff.
 - Secondhand smoke is the smoke that comes off of a lit cigarette or is exhaled by a person who is smoking. Secondhand smoke contains many toxic chemicals that can cause cancer and other major health problems.
 - According to the United States Surgeon General there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.
 - Secondhand smoke in multi-unit buildings can easily drift from one unit to another. Trying to seal off or ventilate a unit does not solve this problem.
 - Having a smoke-free building is the only way to make sure everyone has clean air to breathe.
- The rule will make our building cleaner and save money for our agency.
 - Smoking can cause damage to apartments including strong smells, sticky yellow residue on the walls and other surfaces, and cigarette burns.
 - It can cost over twice as much to clean and turnover a unit with smoking damage.
 - Having a smoke-free building will help keep our homes clean and keep our costs down.
- The rule will make our building safer from smoking-related fires.
 - Many deadly fires that occur in buildings like ours are caused by smoking materials.
 - Having a smoke-free building will keep us all safer and protect our belongings from these fires.

Tips for Talking to your Residents

- Emphasize that the focus of the smoke-free rule is on smoke, not smokers.
- Use plain, everyday language. Avoid technical terms and jargon.
- When communicating with non-English speaking residents, use translators and translated materials.

- Contact Live Smoke Free for assistance with finding translation resources in Minnesota.
- Visit <http://www.mnsmokefreehousing.org/landlords/links.html> to find select translated materials.
- Remember that many residents will have strong opinions about smoking and the new rule. Try to be sensitive to the challenges that the rule could pose to people who smoke but be firm about the importance of protecting all residents from secondhand smoke.



Frequently Asked Questions from Residents and Ways to Respond

Q: Do I have to quit smoking if I want to continue living here?

A: You do not have to quit smoking but you will have to follow the new rule and smoke only in permitted areas.

Q: Don't I have a right to smoke in my own home?

A: Under the law, smoking is not a protected activity and being a smoker is not a protected class of person which means there is no "right to smoke." It is legal for HUD to make this rule.

Q: Will I get evicted if I get caught smoking in my apartment?

A: We do not want anyone to get evicted. If a resident does not follow this rule, we will work with that resident to help him/her comply. We will follow our enforcement guidelines and only view eviction as a last possible resort.

Q: Isn't this discrimination against smokers?

A: Public housing is home to over 2 million people. Thirty-eight percent of those people are children and sixteen percent are over age 62. Having a smoke-free rule is the only way to make sure all public housing residents have healthy, clean air to breathe. This is a trend that has been growing in our state as well as the entire country – in Minnesota there are thousands of apartment buildings that are already smoke free.

Q: Can I use medical marijuana in my apartment?

A: HUD already has a policy prohibiting medical marijuana use in public housing. This smoke-free rule will have no effect on the existing medical marijuana policy.

Q: It's difficult for me to go outside to smoke. How can I be expected to follow this rule?

A: Going outside might be challenging for some residents, however, no exceptions will be made. If it is difficult for you to go outside to smoke, let's discuss possible solutions together.

Q: How can I get help with quitting smoking?

A: QUITPLAN® Services is a free resource available to all Minnesotans who would like to quit or cut back on smoking. You can register by calling 1-888-354-PLAN (7526) or visiting www.quitplan.com.

Contact Live Smoke Free at info@mnsmokefreehousing.org or 651-656-3005 for additional assistance.

Depending on your geographic location, we may connect you with a partner who can provide local assistance.

More information available at:

www.sfpublichousingmn.org

https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/healthy_homes/smokefree

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