

Advice for Enforcing a Smokefree Housing Policy

Congratulations on adopting a smokefree policy for your building! Smokefree apartments, condominiums, and other multi-family buildings are in the best interest of the residents, owners, and management. Smokefree policies are being adopted by housing providers in communities all across the country, and information is available on how to enforce your new policy and promote compliance.

A smokefree policy for your building makes good business sense!

Add the smokefree policy to the lease or house rules. Make sure the policy change is officially added to leases or the house rules. Follow the same procedures for adopting and documenting the smokefree policy—and for notifying residents about the policy—that is required for any other changes to lease provisions and house rules.

Communicate with residents. Communicate what the policy requires residents to do, and what the consequences are for violating the policy. Send a letter to residents when the policy is adopted, and again when the policy goes into effect. Consider holding a meeting for tenants shortly before the policy goes into effect to allow residents to voice concerns and get answers to questions. Provide information about how to access local cessation resources in case residents who smoke are interested in quitting.

Clarify what the smokefree policy means. Residents do not have to quit smoking, and do not have to move out of their home. They simply cannot smoke in the specified areas. The purpose of a smokefree building is to provide a cleaner, safer, healthier living environment for all residents, including smokers and their families. Residents may have a lot of misinformation and fears, so help address their concerns.

Post smokefree signs. Most people do the right thing and comply with smokefree policies without incident when they know what is expected. Posting signs in visible areas at building entrances and in common areas is an important component of achieving compliance. If smoking is prohibited in outdoor areas, be sure to post signs in those locations. Clear signage communicates the smokefree policy with residents, guests, maintenance staff, and others so that everyone knows exactly where they can and cannot smoke. Consider framing some signs in a positive manner, such as “Welcome to our smokefree building. Thank you for not smoking indoors.” Contact your local smokefree housing project to see if they have sample signage.

Community-supported compliance. Residents are one of the best enforcement tools for a smokefree policy. Most people want to live in a building where they are free from exposure to secondhand smoke, and tend to speak up if they are being exposed—especially when they know a policy is in place and is being violated. Let residents know how they can report a suspected violation. If residents continually smell or see smoking in prohibited locations, then it will be difficult to enforce the policy because people will be receiving the cue that smoking is permitted.

Have consistent enforcement procedures in place. A smokefree policy should be treated like any other lease provision or house rule. If the management’s process for addressing lease violations is to send a warning letter for the first incident, followed by a violation letter with a specified fine for second and third incidents, then the smokefree policy should be enforced in the same manner. The possibility of eviction may be part of your violation process, although it is important to remember that eviction is not the goal of a smokefree policy, and efforts should be made to mediate the situation. When notifying

a resident that they are in violation of the smokefree policy, cite any prior violations and let them know the consequences for subsequent violations. Follow through on all reported violations. It will enhance compliance if residents know management takes the smokefree policy seriously, and are consistent and responsive to reported lease violations.

Record enforcement efforts. A process may already be in place for documenting efforts to enforce lease provisions. Add the smokefree policy to a standard lease violation notification form. Be sure to document each reported violation and evidence of the violation (cigarette butts, ashtrays, neighbor reports drifting smoke on specific dates and times). Likewise, document warning letters sent to the resident notifying them of a violation, and any responses from the resident.

Advertise the building as smokefree. Smokefree housing is an amenity that should be promoted when advertising available units in the building. Compliance can be enhanced by advertising the building's smokefree policy because it lets prospective residents know what to expect when they move in, and people can make an informed decision about applying for the building. Surveys around the country show that most residents want to live in a smokefree building. Even people who smoke increasingly do not smoke inside the home in order to protect their family and furnishings.

For more information and additional resources, visit our [Homes page](#).

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