


Smoke-Free Public Housing - Key Informant Interviews Report – Statewide Health Improvement Program (Nov. 1, 2013 – Oct. 31, 2015)

Public housing properties across Minnesota have led successful efforts implementing and enforcing smoke-free housing (SFH) policies. In 2015, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) interviewed local public health agencies and property managers to gain an understanding of the barriers faced in SFH policy implementation and what key factors ensured policy success.

| Barriers to implementation  | Strategies to overcome barriers to implementation | Other key factors to help facilitate implementation |
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| <p>Resistance from residents and staff. Concerns include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infringement of “right to smoke.” • Negative feedback from residents. • High proportion of residents who smoke creates enforcement challenge. • Long-time smoking residents. | <p>Educating residents and staff. Strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using LPH/TA as third party experts. • Resident education sessions. • Emphasize the “right” to clean air for nonsmoking residents. • Apartment testing kits for residual smoke. • Inform residents of policy well in advance to provide opportunity to move out before implementation. | <p>Social and political atmosphere:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated Housing and Urban Development (HUD) policy changes and demonstrated support from HUD of smoke-free policies motivate implementation. • Emphasis on the changing environment around smoking – it’s been banned from other buildings; people expect to have smoke-free housing, too. |
| <p>Other priorities for staff, lack of adequate capacity for implementing a new policy.</p> | <p>LPH and/or TA agency play an important role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources: signage, policy templates, answering questions, connections to legal resources. • Be persistent, but patient – timing must be right; create positive relationships. • Use data to emphasize economic impact. | <p>Resident input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent SHS complaints, particularly due to poor ventilation of building. • Residents’ testimony to board. • Ensure that residents’ concerns are heard, particularly at information sessions. |
| <p>Populations that live in public housing can be vulnerable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable accommodations needed for elderly/disabled. • Few public housing options (especially in rural areas). | <p>Support of onsite staff, particularly social workers, is key to success. Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one resident meetings are needed to ensure policy understanding and to find solutions to lease violations (mutual lease termination). • Cessation support from social workers is much more effective than brochures only. | <p>Focus on cessation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support residents in smoking cessation and recognize the complexity of addiction. Provide more than brochures; residents need one-on-one support. |
| <p>Enforcement barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to prove violations. • Lengthy eviction process. • Grandfathering. | <p>Having staff and residents who are willing to report violations is key to successful enforcement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be consistent in enforcement; no grandfathering. Violations proven during annual inspections. • Create formal reporting process for residents/staff. | <p>Success stories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight successes from other properties within management companies. • Connect property owners to share successes. |