

How Do Smoke & Tobacco-Free Campus Policies Work?

Advice for Enforcing College Campus Policies

Is your campus considering a tobacco-free policy? Has your campus already adopted a tobacco-free policy? Learn more about how campuses build a culture of compliance so the policy works for everyone.

Currently, 62 of California's 115 community college campuses are 100% smoke and tobacco-free, including vaping products. Nationwide, more than 2,100 college and university campus sites are 100% smoke and tobacco-free, including no vaping, anywhere on campus.

How do campuses enforce a smoke and tobacco-free policy?

Many campuses enforce their smoke and tobacco-free policy in the same manner they enforce other health and safety policies. Other campuses have created new procedures that are specific to their smoke and tobacco-free policy.

Your campus should have discussions among stakeholders – including students, faculty, staff, health & wellness, campus safety, and community partners – to discuss and decide what a successful policy looks like on your campus, and the best ways to build awareness and compliance with your policy.

Also, some campuses are re-thinking how policies are enforced as part of a broader assessment of social justice on our campuses and in our communities. They are putting an emphasis on having more equitable policies that support community members, reduce financial penalties, and reduce contact with law enforcement or security. A policy that applies to all products, all people, and all places is most effective.



Remember: The goal is not to punish people who are addicted to tobacco. The goal is to create a healthier learning and working environment for students, faculty, staff, and the community by reducing tobacco exposure and use.

Enforcement Approaches

How policy violations are addressed can be divided into two main approaches. **Educational approaches** seek to improve compliance through educating, reminding, and supporting people. **Punitive approaches** follow traditional protocols for violations, including issuing citations and fines, and responsibility for enforcement may fall to campus safety or law enforcement.

Campuses often use a combination of approaches, with a focus on educational approaches during the first year of the policy, and then might add punitive options to address repeat violations. However, many campuses are shifting away from penalty-centered enforcement to non-punitive educational compliance out of the desire to support, and not punish, people who use tobacco and violate the policy. **Examples include:**

Educational:

- Signs & banners
- Policy reminder cards
- "Approach, Inform, Refer"
- Ambassador programs

Punitive:

- Fines/Citations
- Administrative enforcement
- Online compliance training



Educate | Remind | Support

The overwhelming majority of people respect and follow smoke and tobacco-free campus policies. Compliance can improve when people understand WHY the policy is in place, know WHAT is expected of them, and WHEN they see or hear reminders. **Spending time, effort, and resources to plan for implementing your new policy are essential parts of building future compliance.**

Educate

Why is our campus tobacco-free?

Make sure people know why your campus chooses to be a tobacco-free environment. Many campuses are tobacco-free to provide a healthier, cleaner, more accessible, and supportive environment. Share messages that are personal to why your campus community is tobacco-free and your campus culture.

What does our policy require?

When: Communicate clearly about when your campus policy goes into effect (e.g. beginning of fall semester).

What: Spell out that smoking, vaping, and other tobacco use is not allowed anywhere on campus, including parking lots. Specify which products are included: smoking, vaping, and marijuana.

Who: Emphasize that the policy **applies equally to everyone** who comes on campus: students, faculty, staff, guests, and the public. Be clear that people need to go off campus to smoke, vape, or use tobacco.

How to communicate the policy:

Post signs at key locations around campus, including at campus entrances, building entrances, in parking lots, and in places that are tobacco use hot-spots. **Visual reminders** like posters, banners, and sidewalk art are useful.

Positive messaging is important, such as "Thank you for respecting our tobacco-free campus." Reflect your campus culture and values in your messaging. Create a **campus map** that outlines the boundaries in which tobacco use is not permitted. Include the campus map on signs, your website, and other communications.



Use many communication channels:

Identify channels that your campus already uses for important information and updates. Work with students to identify the best social media options for reaching students. Some campuses have a robust newspaper or radio station that can help spread the word. Reach faculty and staff through their trusted voices. Use email or text blasts. Dedicate a page of your campus website to the policy. Include policy details, campus map, frequently asked questions, cessation resources, how violations are addressed, and who people can contact for more information.

Remind

Most people follow tobacco-free campus policies:

People tend to do the right thing when they know what is expected. Seeing and hearing positive reminders about the policy goes a long way towards people following the policy. It's especially important to remind your campus about the policy requirements in the few months before the policy goes into effect, when it first goes into effect, and at the start of each semester/quarter.

Set an expectation of compliance:

Help people know what to expect before they arrive on campus. Highlight the policy on your website, in admissions and recruitment materials, in the student handbook, and at orientations. Include the policy in advertising, hiring, and human resources materials. Mention the policy in promotions for games and events.

Use educational enforcement approaches:

These approaches focus on educating and reminding people about the policy, rather than punitive approaches that result in citations, fines, or administrative enforcement like disciplinary action by Student Affairs or Human Resources.

Policy reminder cards (right) can be handed out by students, faculty, staff, and security when they see someone violating the policy.

Policy Ambassador programs are volunteers on campus students, faculty, and/or staff – who help increase awareness of and compliance with the policy. Ambassadors are trained about the policy and how to communicate with people. They educate and remind people about not using tobacco on campus. Policy Ambassador programs have successfully been used on many campuses.

"30 People, 30 Days" is a Policy Ambassador activity where 30 volunteers walk around campus during the first 30 days of the new policy to remind people about the policy and hand out cessation information.

For more information & options for campus enforcement, visit California Tobacco Free Colleges at <https://catobaccofreecolleges.org/enforce-policy>

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Source: catobaccofreecolleges.org/enforce-policy

Support

Supporting people who use tobacco is an important part of your campus policy.

Nicotine use is an addiction and most people who smoke or use other tobacco products want to quit. A tobacco-free campus can be a big adjustment for people who use tobacco. It's also an opportunity that many people may welcome to encourage and motivate them to cut back or quit tobacco.

What support is available to people who smoke and vape?

Learn what cessation resources are available in your county and for your campus community. Promote those resources in all of your policy communications.

Kick It California is a free service for all Californians to help people quit smoking or vaping. They offer cessation services in many languages by phone, chat, text, and app. **For help quitting smoking or vaping**, visit www.kickitca.org, text Quit Vaping to 66819, or call 800-300-8086.

Example: Ohlone College

Ohlone College has had 100% smoke-free campus policy, including e-cigarette use, on their Fremont and Newark campuses since 2013.



How does Ohlone College enforce their policy?

Ohlone focuses on peer education. When the policy first went into effect, Ohlone used the "30 People, 30 Days" approach where volunteers were recruited and educated about the policy by the Student Health Center, and then reminded people on campus about the policy and cessation options.

Ohlone also raised awareness about its policy by posting flyers around campus, hanging up banners in key locations, printing a smoke-free message on campus bookstore bags, and stenciling "no smoking beyond this point" at campus entrances. Students painted smoke-free signs, held a policy postcard design contest to engage the student body, and personalize the policy outreach to their campus.

Example: University of Kentucky

The University of Kentucky has had a 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy since 2009. In their experience, "Creating a culture of policy compliance increases the likelihood of a successful policy and aids the implementation process."

Tobacco-Free UK:
A Healthy Place to Live, Work and Learn

The university developed a policy implementation guide, which includes tips for students, faculty, and staff on approaching people who are using tobacco to remind them of the policy.

University of Kentucky recommends:

- Use the same messages with employees, students, and visitors
- Ask violators to please respect others on campus (not telling them to quit smoking or quit using tobacco) by following the policy while on campus
- Use a firm, polite, and compassionate approach
- Don't apologize for the policy and don't use the term 'ban.' Instead, use more positive framing that tobacco use is not allowed here for everyone's health.

Frequently Asked Questions

Suggestions for Responding About a New Campus Policy

What do people who smoke, vape, or use tobacco do when it's not allowed on campus?

Our campus isn't requiring anyone to quit. Our policy means that people cannot smoke, vape, or use tobacco products while on campus property, including parking lots. Our campus property ends at [share boundaries]. If you'd like information to help you not use tobacco while you're on campus, [connect cessation resources that are available to your campus community].

Why does our campus not allow designated smoking/tobacco-use areas?

Our campus no longer has designated smoking/tobacco areas for several reasons. **First**, designated areas do not effectively protect health and are inconsistent with the goal of our policy to create a healthier tobacco-free campus environment for everyone. **Second**, smoking areas are shown to create a social space that can encourage people to gather and makes it harder for people who are trying to quit, or to stay quit, to do so successfully. **Third**, experience shows that smoking areas create confusion about where and when people can use tobacco, and smoking areas are often not followed. **The bottom line is that smoking areas do not work well and people often see them as a green light to continue using tobacco on campus.**

Why can't people smoke, vape, or use tobacco in parking lots?

Parking lots used to be designated smoking areas, but tobacco use is now not permitted anywhere on campus. Smoking in parking lots, or other designated areas, do not protect health, are not followed well, and make it harder for people to stay quit. See the above question for more information!

Who is responsible for enforcing the policy?

Responsibility for complying with the policy lies first with individuals who use tobacco, and it is also the responsibility of everyone on our campus to promote a culture of good compliance with our policy. [Share who on campus is responsible for addressing violations].

What will happen if someone violates the policy?

The goal of the policy is to create a healthier environment for everyone to learn and work, not to punish people for using tobacco. Our campus will remind people about the policy, request they respect the campus culture by not using tobacco on campus, and referring people to cessation support. If people repeatedly violate the policy, [share your campus' specific next steps for enforcement]. It is more productive to be supportive, rather than punitive.

