

Tobacco-Free Policy Rationale

Information for Colleges and Universities Considering Adopting a Smoke and Tobacco-Free Policy

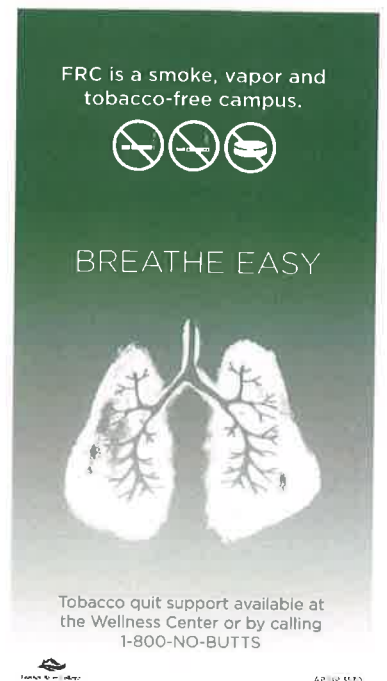
INTRODUCTION

Commercial tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable and premature death, accounting for an estimated 480,000 American deaths in the United States each year, or one out of every five deaths.¹

In order to counter the negative effects of commercial tobacco on the college population, the American College Health Association (ACHA) has recommended all colleges and universities adopt a 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy.² In January 2021, ACHA released a White Paper on strategies for addressing e-cigarette use and vaping on campus. The authors noted the importance of adopting and implementing comprehensive smoke and tobacco-free policies as well as promoting accessible and relevant tobacco treatment programs for students and employees.³

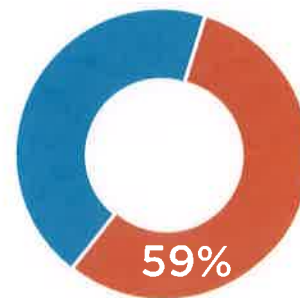
In California, an increasing number of public colleges and universities are adopting comprehensive smoke and tobacco-free policies.

- In 2012, the University of California (UC) Office of the President adopted a system-wide policy prohibiting smoking and use of all commercial tobacco products on UC-owned or leased property. The policy also prohibits the sale, advertising, and marketing of tobacco products on UC campuses. The systemwide policy was implemented on all 10 UC educational campuses, five medical campuses, and University labs by January 2014.⁴
- In 2017, the California State University (CSU) Chancellor's Office adopted a 100% smoke and tobacco-free policy for all 23 campuses as well as all CSU-owned property. Similar to the UC system-wide policy, the CSU policy also prohibits the sale of tobacco products on CSU campuses.⁵
- In 2018, the California Community College Board of Governors adopted a resolution supporting the adoption of 100% smoke and tobacco-free policies at all campuses within the system.⁶ Following this action, the Student Senate of California Community Colleges (SSCCC) passed a resolution in Spring 2020 to making smoke and tobacco-free policy adoption a legislative priority.⁷



SMOKE/TOBACCO-FREE POLICY TRENDS

- As of May 2022, 104 of California’s 148 public colleges and universities are 100% smoke-free. Of these, 95 campuses are 100% smoke and tobacco-free, including electronic smoking devices.⁸
- In total, 59% of private and public California colleges and universities are 100% smoke or tobacco-free. Public campuses are more likely to have a comprehensive smoke and tobacco-free policy compared to private institutions. In May 2022, 70% of public campuses were smoke or tobacco-free compared to 43% of private institutions.
- Nationally, approximately 2,604 colleges and universities are 100% smoke-free. Of these schools, 2,176 are 100% smoke and tobacco-free, a sharp increase from 75 colleges in Spring 2018.⁹
- More and more colleges and universities are adopting “smoke and tobacco-free” policies over “smoke-free” policies to prevent the increase of smokeless tobacco and e-cigarette use on campus and to have inclusive language covering all forms of nicotine and tobacco products.
- College and university campuses, as well as cities and counties across the state, are updating the policy definitions of “smoking” to include the operation of electronic smoking devices and “smoke” to include aerosol emitted from e-products.



CALIFORNIA COLLEGES
— PRIVATE AND PUBLIC —
100% SMOKE OR TOBACCO-FREE



CAMPUS POLICIES 100% SMOKE OR TOBACCO-FREE

Background and Scientific Rationale

DECREASE EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE

- The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found secondhand tobacco smoke to be a risk to public health and has classified secondhand smoke as a group A carcinogen, the most dangerous class of carcinogen.¹⁰
- The California Air Resources Board has categorized secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant, the same category as diesel exhaust.¹¹
- The US Surgeon General of the United States concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke and establishing smoke-free environments is the only proven way to prevent exposure.¹²
- E-cigarette aerosol contains volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and ultrafine/fine particles.¹³

SMOKE/TOBACCO-FREE POLICIES CHANGE TOBACCO USE BEHAVIOR

- A study published in the British Medical Journal (2002) concluded that tobacco users who worked in a completely smoke-free environment were more likely to quit than their counterparts working in areas without strong smoke-free policies. Additionally, individuals working in smoke-free environments were more likely to decrease the number of cigarettes they smoked throughout the day.¹⁴
- Smoke-free campus policies are proven to decrease current smoking prevalence in students, decrease the amount of cigarettes used by those who continue to smoke, positively influence students' perceptions of peer smoking, change social norms around tobacco use, and increase favorable attitudes towards regulation of tobacco. These findings are consistent with a study that found that college students who lived in smoke-free residences were more likely to be nonsmokers.¹⁵

PROTECT WORKERS NOT PROTECTED BY STATE LAW

More than 90% of Californians approve of a law to protect workers from secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace.¹⁶ Yet, many individuals who work on campus are still unprotected from secondhand smoke exposure throughout the day such as those who care for buildings and grounds, facilities, and campus security.



ELIMINATE TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE ON CAMPUS

- A study of littered tobacco product waste at UC San Diego and San Diego State University revealed that in 80 volunteer hours, 31,410 butts were collected at these institutions (combined). This represented about 380 butts per volunteer per hour.¹⁷
- Cigarette waste is extremely toxic to our environment. Cigarette butts contain the same toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke. The small filter, when wet, releases thousands of toxic chemicals back into the environment. These filters and chemicals are washed into waterways by water runoff.¹⁸
- By eliminating tobacco litter, colleges are also decreasing fire risk on campus, decreasing the cost and time associated with cleaning up tobacco litter, and increasing campus beautification.

PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS BY DECREASING EXPOSURE TO TOBACCO PRODUCTS

- In 2018, US Surgeon General Jerome Adams issued an advisory about the dangers of electronic cigarette use among teens. In the advisory, he declared e-cigarette use among young people an epidemic.¹⁹
- Use of new products, such as electronic smoking devices, continues to increase in young adult and youth populations. With e-cigarette use rates doubling between 2017 to 2019, reaching 27.5% of youth populations using e-cigarettes in the last 30-days.²⁰
- New and emerging products may introduce young adults to tobacco use or promote dual use of cigarettes and e-cigarette products, with 40% of current college e-cigarette users reporting having never used any form of tobacco prior to using an e-cigarette.²¹

- Use of products that mimic tobacco use, specifically e-cigarettes, may renormalize smoking and challenge the implementation and enforcement of tobacco-free policies that are proven to decrease tobacco use.
- Use of tobacco products, especially dual use with e-cigarettes increases an individual's susceptibility to respiratory infections and illnesses, including the COVID-19 virus by an upwards of 5 times.²²
- Vaping marijuana and vaping nicotine dramatically increased among 19 to 22 year old, with both more than doubling between 2017 and 2019. The percent of young adult college students who vaped marijuana in the past 30 days increased from 5% in 2017 to 14% in 2019. Similar increases were seen among students vaping nicotine with 6% reporting use in 2017 up to 22% use in 2019.²³
- As students graduate, they are transitioning into tobacco-free environments. In California, the majority of hospital and K-12 campuses are 100% smoke-free or tobacco-free. Nationwide, worksites, college campuses, health care centers, and outdoor recreational facilities are adopting comprehensive tobacco use policies.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the health consequences of secondhand smoke?

Exposure to secondhand smoke is known to cause death and disease and is the third leading cause of preventable death in this country, killing over 34,000 non-smokers each year.²⁴ The Surgeon General of the United States has concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke and any exposure to tobacco smoke – even an occasional cigarette or exposure to secondhand smoke – is harmful.²⁵ The US EPA has found secondhand tobacco smoke to be a risk to public health, and has classified secondhand smoke as a group A carcinogen, the most dangerous class of carcinogen²⁶. Furthermore, the California Air Resources Board has categorized secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant.²⁷

What does 100% smoke and tobacco-free mean?

A 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy prohibits smoking and commercial tobacco use on all campus property including all indoor and outdoor areas. This includes but is not limited to walkways, outdoor common areas, and parking lots. California state law prohibits smoking in all indoor areas, within 20-ft. of public buildings (including colleges and universities), and in all state-owned vehicles. A 100% smoke and tobacco-free policy would include products such as: cigarettes, electronic smoking devices, cigars, hookah, pipes, roll-your-own tobacco, smokeless tobacco, snus, and nicotine products not currently regulated by the FDA for cessation purposes. These policies also prohibit the use combustible and vaporized marijuana products as well as other plant-based products that can be heater, vaporized, or burned.

**Will a 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy cause conflict between a college and its employees?
Why should colleges and universities consider adopting a 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy?**

The adoption of a 100% smoke and tobacco-free policy promotes the health and well-being of everyone on campus, including employees. Currently, individuals who work in outdoor areas are not provided with the same level of protection from secondhand smoke as those working indoors. A 100% tobacco-free policy will provide equal protection to everyone on campus. Additionally, tobacco-free policies may encourage smokers to quit using tobacco products and will support those individuals who have successfully quit using tobacco. Smoke and tobacco-free campus policies protect the health and safety of faculty, staff, students and visitors by eliminating secondhand smoke and tobacco product waste on campus. Everyone will breathe easier, and this will assure equal access for individuals most vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke exposure, such as those with asthma and allergies. Additionally, by adopting a 100% smoke and tobacco-free policy, colleges and universities will:

- Promote clean air, a healthy environment, and healthy behavior choices;
- Save money and staff time spent cleaning tobacco product waste by eliminating cigarette butts and other tobacco waste;
- Prepare students for smoke and tobacco-free work environments (e.g., hospitals, K-12 schools, etc.);
- Prevent students from initiating tobacco use;
- Encourage students and employees who use tobacco to quit or decrease use; and those who have quit using tobacco products.

Why include electronic smoking devices? Aren't they designed to help people quit smoking?

Electronic smoking devices, or e-cigarettes, not regulated by the FDA as a quit device. It's a common misconception that e-cigarettes emit a harmless water vapor. Research reveals that the solution used in e-cigarettes does contain toxic contaminants and these contaminants are released into the environment when a user exhales the aerosol. Furthermore, recent research is showing a drastic increase in use of e-cigarettes, especially among youth and young adults. Since e-cigarettes are misunderstood to be a cessation device, young people are more willing to experiment with the products, which may lead to long-term nicotine addiction. Comprehensive tobacco-free policies that include e-cigarettes and other nicotine products not regulated by the FDA for cessation purposes may discourage the initiation of novelty smoking and nicotine delivery devices.

What about policy compliance? How will this policy be enforced?

Many colleges and universities find that educational campaigns are a useful strategy for increasing policy compliance. These approaches include the use of student and staff ambassadors, signage, orientation trainings, and reinforcement trainings for noncompliance. The goal of these policies is to prevent student initiation of tobacco use, support individuals who do use tobacco and nicotine products in quitting, and create a healthy and safe learning and work environment. Thus, colleges and universities are strongly encouraged to dedicate time to successfully implementing new policies and conducting regular educational campaigns promote the policy and referring individuals who use tobacco products to free and easily accessible tobacco treatment services.

How will a 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy impact enrollment?

There is no association between the adoption of a 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy and a decrease in student enrollment.²⁸ In fact, many colleges and universities promote a healthy and tobacco-free campus environment as a way of increasing enrollment.

What are the benefits and disadvantages of creating or moving designated smoking areas to less populated areas?

Overall, designated smoking areas have many more disadvantages than benefits. A study from Stanford University found that in outdoor designated areas with multiple smokers, levels of toxic air contaminants from secondhand smoke may be the same or higher than indoors, therefore, creating a hazardous environment to individuals standing in or around these areas. Additionally, secondhand smoke is proven to travel outside of designated areas; distance depends on wind strength and direction.²⁹

Designated areas have also been found to encourage tobacco use by creating a social environment for daily and non-daily tobacco users. By increasing the number of individuals smoking or vaping in one area, students are more likely to believe that more people use tobacco products than actually do. This misperception affects the norm of smoking and vaping on campus and may also contribute to increased tobacco use. Finally, designated areas are often heavily littered and smell of toxic tobacco waste. Unless regularly cleaned and maintained, these areas are unhealthy, smelly, and an eyesore.

Have other colleges experienced success with moving designated areas to less populated areas?

Colleges throughout California have experimented with decreasing the number of designated areas; moving them to less populated locations; and allowing smoking only in parking lots, designated parking lots, or designated areas in designated parking lots. The majority of campuses that designate smoking areas later strengthen their policies to 100% smoke-free and tobacco-free. Motivation for doing so includes: increased litter in designated areas, excessive secondhand smoke on campus, difficulties understanding where individuals can and cannot use tobacco, and expenses associated with setting up and maintaining designated areas.

How have other colleges addressed student housing in relation to a 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policy?

There are different ways to address student housing on 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policies. One option is to include college-owned housing in the policy, so that the entire campus and all associated properties go smoke tobacco-free at the same time. Alternatively, a campus could temporarily designate one smoking area near campus housing as individuals transition the new policy. A planned date to eliminate the designated area must be specified in the policy, for example one year following the policy start date. These options allow students who live on campus time to quit smoking or change their behavior. Prior to the policy being implemented, there will be time for all campus community members to plan ahead for when tobacco is no longer allowed on campus. Some individuals will quit using tobacco and others will need to make alternative plans, and can discuss options for managing cravings while on campus property with their health care provider or the campus health center. Helping students make a plan for living in 100% smoke and tobacco-free student housing reduces the likelihood of individuals violating the policy or putting themselves in any potential danger by leaving campus to use tobacco. Additionally, it is important for Student Housing to alert new students that campus-owned housing is 100% smoke and tobacco-free.

What is the level of satisfaction at other colleges and universities in California that have adopted a 100% tobacco-free campus policy?

An increased number of colleges and universities in California are adopting 100% smoke and tobacco-free campus policies. Many colleges with 100% smoke-free and tobacco-free policies previously had designated area policies that were ineffective. The majority of colleges and universities who have adopted comprehensive smoke-free and tobacco-free policies have done so at the request of their students and with leadership from the Associated Student Government.

Endnotes

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