

Tobacco-Free Schools

Set the right example with a 100 percent tobacco-free policy

Students are prohibited by state law from using or possessing tobacco products on outdoor school property. What about staff and visitors? Students may be exposed to secondhand smoke if these individuals are permitted to smoke on school grounds, and students often look to adults as role models, especially when it comes to tobacco use.

A 100 percent tobacco-free school policy prohibits all tobacco use by everyone including staff, faculty, visitors and students on school grounds, and at all school events, at all times. A 100 percent tobacco-free school policy delivers a wide range of significant benefits, from promoting a healthy lifestyle and a safe learning environment to preventing youth tobacco use initiation and future addictions. A 100 percent tobacco-free school policy protects students, faculty, staff and visitors from the health risks associated with tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure. It also sets a positive example for students through healthy role modeling. A 100 percent tobacco-free school policy reinforces and supports school-based prevention education and can help assure compliance with the Smoke-Free Ohio Workplace Act, which requires all public places and places of employment to prohibit smoking indoors. Many organizations will use this law to extend tobacco-free policies to their entire campuses. In fact, businesses from hospitals to colleges to large manufacturers have already established 100 percent tobacco-free campus policies.

More reasons to go tobacco free:

- Reduce school maintenance costs.
- Protect students from developing addictions.
- Reduce the risk of fires due to smoking materials.

Can a 100 percent tobacco-free policy help prevent students from using tobacco?

Yes. One of the most important benefits of a 100 percent tobacco-free school policy is the impact on smoking rates among students. The Office on Smoking and Health, located in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reports tobacco-use prevention programs are more likely to be effective when schools develop and enforce a 100 percent tobacco-free school policy.

Are there any school districts in Ohio that have a 100 percent tobacco-free policy?

Yes. A number of Ohio school districts have already implemented a 100 percent tobacco-free policy:

Alexander Local School District	Jackson Local Schools	Norwood City Schools
Buckeye Valley School District	Kent City School District	Princeton City Schools
Canton Local School District	Licking Valley Local Schools	Southern Meigs School District
Cleveland Municipal Schools	Medina City Schools	Trimble Local School District
Dayton Public Schools	Mentor School District	Worthington School District
Dublin City Schools	Middletown-Monroe City Schools	
Fairview Park City Schools	Newark City School District	

- If your school has a tobacco-free policy, please send an electronic version to Angela.abenaim@odh.ohio.gov and your district can be added to the list of champions.



How can my school district become tobacco free?

The seven steps to a 100 percent tobacco-free policy are review of current policy; enlist support; draft new policy; present to school board; communicate new policy; enforce new policy; and evaluate. It is important to remember policy change takes time and following these can guide you through the process. The seven steps were adapted from the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund, 100 Percent Tobacco-Free Schools Project and are detailed in the pages below.

1. Assess your school district's current policy:

State law prohibits smoking inside any school building and prohibits students from using or possessing tobacco products on school grounds and at school activities. At a minimum, your school district's existing policy about tobacco should reflect state law. However, school districts also have the ability to create and implement more comprehensive policies on tobacco use. You should begin your 100 percent tobacco-free school efforts by carefully reviewing the current policy and determining where the policy is lacking. Then, begin to think of ways to make the policy stronger.

Use this chart to assess your district's current policy and see where changes need to be made.

My district's existing policy prohibits the use of all tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, spit, dip, etc.):	YES	NO
By students		
By staff		
By visitors		
On all school property		
At all times		
At all school-sponsored events both on and off campus		

2. Enlist support:

Gaining support from a variety of stakeholders can help ensure the policy is passed. Ask for support from students, parents, PTA members, the local health department, school nurses, clergy, local tobacco-free coalitions, local business owners and medical and allied health professionals. You can reach out to potential supporters through community surveys or public forums.



3. Draft your policy using the model tobacco-free policy as a guide.

Essential elements of a tobacco-free policy include the following:

- A concise statement for implementing the policy.
- A clear definition of the terms "tobacco," "possession" and use."
- A clear no-use/no-possession statement for students: for example, "Tobacco possession and use is prohibited at all times, including non-school hours, on all school grounds and in vehicles and at all school-sponsored events."
- A clear no-use statement for all staff, visitors, faculty and contractors: for example, "Tobacco use is prohibited at all times, including non-school hours, on all school grounds and at all school-sponsored events on and off campus."
- Include a statement about tobacco advertising prohibition and list enforcement provisions for violations of the policy, with separate provisions for staff and students.

The following is a model policy that is ready for adaptation by your district. This model policy and information is provided by the Ohio Department of Health for educational purposes only and is not to be construed as legal opinion or as a substitute for obtaining legal advice from an attorney. Readers with questions about the application of the law to specific facts are encouraged to consult legal counsel familiar with the laws of their jurisdictions.

MODEL POLICY FOR 100% TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOLS FOR _____ SCHOOL DISTRICT

RATIONALE

The Board of Education has a duty to protect and promote the health and well-being of all students and staff. The board is acutely aware of the serious health risks associated with the use of tobacco products; both to the users and non-users, and that most tobacco use begins by the age of 18. The board recognizes district personnel and school visitors serve as role models to students and, therefore, adopts this 100% tobacco-free school policy to endorse a healthy lifestyle and prevent tobacco use.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy, "tobacco" is defined to include any lighted or unlighted cigarette, cigar, pipe, bidi, clove cigarette and any other smoking products, and both spit and spitless tobacco, also known as smokeless, dip, chew, Snus and snuff, in any form.

TOBACCO USE PROHIBITED

No student, staff member, volunteer or school visitor is permitted to smoke, inhale, dip, chew or use tobacco at any time, including non-school hours; in any building, facility or vehicle owned, leased, rented or chartered (by school district); or on school grounds, athletic grounds or parking lots.

No student, staff member or volunteer is permitted to smoke, inhale, dip, chew or use tobacco at any time, including non-school hours, at any school-sponsored event off campus. Additionally, no student is permitted to possess cigarettes, other tobacco products, papers used to roll cigarettes, lighters or other paraphernalia at any time.

TOBACCO PROMOTION PROHIBITED

Tobacco advertising is prohibited on school grounds, in all school-sponsored publications and at all school-sponsored events. Tobacco promotional items including clothing, bags, lighters and other personal articles, are not permitted on school grounds, in school vehicles or at school-sponsored events.

NOTICE

"No Tobacco" signs will be posted throughout the district at entrances and other appropriate locations on all academic buildings, administrative spaces and athletic fields indicating tobacco use is not permitted. Students will be provided notice of this policy through student handbooks, and district personnel will be provided notice of this policy through personnel handbooks. District vehicles will display the international "No Smoking" sign. Announcements will be made during home athletic events both before the event and during intermission, as well as at all school functions where deemed appropriate. School programs will include a written reminder of the no tobacco policy.

ENFORCEMENT

Disciplinary measures taken against students and staff for violations of this policy comply with the requirements of Ohio law and related district policies.

Note: Disciplinary measures listed below are to serve as a model - they may need to be adjusted in order to comply with current school policies and employment contracts; however, a 100% tobacco-free schools policy should be enforced through disciplinary measures. Alternative measures to consider include: detentions, Saturday school, community service projects and tobacco cessation programs.

The following disciplinary actions shall be taken against **students** found in violation of this policy:

- 1st offense: Completion of a tobacco education program
- 2nd offense: Three-day, in-school suspension
- 3rd offense: Five-day, in-school suspension
- Subsequent violations: Recommendation for expulsion

The following disciplinary actions shall be taken against district **personnel** found in violation of this policy:

- 1st offense: Written reprimand placed in personnel file
- 2nd offense: Three-day suspension without pay, written reprimand placed in personnel file
- 3rd offense: Five-day suspension without pay, termination recommendation made to Board of Education, written reprimand placed in personnel file

The following disciplinary actions shall be taken against school **visitors** found in violation of this policy:

- 1st offense: Verbal notification of the policy
- Multiple offenses: Removal from school property or, if off-campus, removal from school activity

LEGAL REFERENCES

Pro-Children Act of 1994, 20 U.S.C. § 6081 Et seq. (1994)
OHIO REV. CODE ANN. §§ 3313.20, 3313.47, 3313.751, 3791.031, 3794.01 (LEXIS 2005)

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4. Prepare and Present Your Policy to the School Board:

After you gain support from stakeholders and draft a policy, it is time to gain support from the school board. Make sure all school board members understand the importance and the benefits of a 100 percent tobacco-free policy. Meet individually with the superintendent and each member of the board to gain support. Identify any school board members who strongly support the issue and enlist their support in advocating for approval from other members. Find out what concerns members have so you can address the concerns during school board presentations.

Be well-prepared for the presentation. Know what forms need to be completed, how many readings or votes are required before the policy is adopted and if the policy must be approved by a subcommittee prior to presentation to the school board.

Make your presentation brief. Include the facts about 100 percent tobacco-free schools, personal stories from students, recognition of supporters and serious concerns raised during the individual meetings held previously. You may invite stakeholders and supporters to the meeting.

5. Now the policy has been passed, how do I communicate the policy to students, staff, community and visitors?

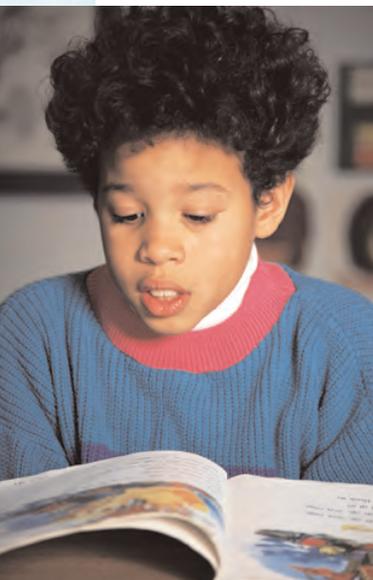
Once the policy is passed, effectively communicating the policy to all the affected people is one of the most important steps. You should begin communicating your policy at least three months prior to implementation to give visitors, students, staff and contract workers ample time to adjust to the change. Communications should be positive and reinforce that 100 percent tobacco-free schools are in the best interest of everyone—educationally, socially and health wise. The provisions of the policy and a statement of the consequences of violations for students, staff and visitors should be made clear to all stakeholders. Some strategies for communicating your policy include; articles in local newspaper, information in school publications, information on individual school and school district Web sites, statements in student and employee handbooks, letters to parents, announcements at sporting events and other school activities, statements in sports programs and other school activity brochures, signs and banners promoting 100 percent tobacco-free school at all entrances and grounds and athletic fields and tobacco policy compliance language placed in contracts with firms and companies that perform contract work at the schools.

6. How do I enforce the policy?

Enforcing the 100 percent tobacco-free school policy is one of the keys to making the program effective. Staff members may resist complying with the policy because of the extremely addictive nature of nicotine. Members of the staff who do use tobacco should be encouraged to quit. The Ohio Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) is Ohio's free, telephone-based cessation counseling service. The Ohio Tobacco Quit Line partners with leading health care insurance companies and employer groups to provide free nicotine patches to qualified callers.

If you do see violations, it is important to have clear guidelines in place for how to address them. The guidelines should be explained in detail in the policy and outlined in communications with students, staff, visitors and contract workers. The 100 percent tobacco-free school policy should be enforced in the same manner as any violation of school policy.

Consistent enforcement of the policy is needed to promote compliance and ensure the benefits of the policy are realized. Active enforcement of the policy during the first few weeks and months the policy is in place will help ensure adherence becomes the norm.



7. Evaluate your policy:

Periodic evaluation of the policy will allow you to deal with any glitches. Ask schools in the district to report any problems with compliance and address the problems right away. Ask students, staff, visitors and community members for feedback and keep records of the responses.

If your school district follows the steps outlined here, adopting, passing, implementing and enforcing a 100 percent tobacco-free schools policy should be a success. Most barriers to success occur when schools are in the process of gaining support for their policies or having the policy passed by the school board. By being prepared and warding off problems before they become issues, you will assure a smooth transition into a tobacco-free district. Compliance should not be a problem if you communicate the policy well and consistently enforce the policy. Be up front and open with all shareholders about the policy and the repercussions.

Once your school district adopts a 100 percent tobacco-free policy, contact the Ohio Department of Health for a free 100 percent tobacco-free school sign. Signs can be obtained by sending a copy of the policy to:

Ohio Department of Health
Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Program
246 N. High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Or send the policy electronically to Angela.abenaim@odh.ohio.gov and ask for a 100 % tobacco-free school sign. For more information or assistance contact the Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Program at 1-866-557-7868.

