

Benefits of Tobacco-Free Worksites

Employers have become increasingly aware of the value of providing safe, health-promoting workplace environments for workers. Though tobacco use rates among adults have declined, tobacco remains the single greatest preventable determinant of disease, death, and disability. Places that allow tobacco use provide environmental cues that can trigger strong cravings or urges to smoke and may contribute to continued smoking. These environmental cues may also reinforce the development of nicotine dependence in early stage smokers. Tobacco-friendly environments act as barriers to quitting and sustain addiction, as treatment providers recommend removing cues to recover from tobacco dependence.¹⁻⁸ Nearly 9 out of 10 people who currently smoke would not begin smoking if they could start over, and 9 out of 10 have made one or more attempts to quit.⁹

Tobacco-free worksites help create a culture of health. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommends that employers “establish and maintain entirely tobacco-free workplaces, allowing no use of any tobacco products across the entire workplace campus.”¹⁰ Implementing policies to create tobacco- and smoke-free work environments, which help people reduce their tobacco use, help people quit tobacco, and protect people from second hand smoke, is an essential component of supporting worker well-being and optimizing productivity. Tobacco-free worksites send a consistent message that the employer cares about the health of all employees.

Research demonstrating the value of tobacco-free worksite policies

- Tobacco free worksites reduce both smoking prevalence and cigarette consumption, and increase smoking cessation.¹¹⁻¹⁵
- Smoking bans at work are an important motivation for smoking cessation.¹³
- Hospital data show a reduced risk of admission for smoking-related diseases, with the greatest reductions from comprehensive policies that included smoking banned in workplaces.¹⁶
- Complete workplace smoking bans, with no designated areas, are substantially more effective at reducing smoking, smoking-related diseases, and butt litter than are partial bans.^{11,17-20}
- Laws for 100% smoke-free workplaces are associated with significantly lower rates of initiating smoking among adolescents and young adults.¹⁴
- Campus-wide smoke-free policies have no detrimental effect on employee or consumer attitudes or behaviors.²¹
- Implementing a smoke-free medical campus did not adversely affect inpatient volume, significantly increased inpatient Nicotine Replacement Therapy use, and decreased hospital employee smoking rates.²²
- A majority of employees support smoke-free worksite campus policies.^{15,23}
- On tobacco-free college campuses, versus smoke-free campuses or those with designated areas, fewer students reported exposure to secondhand smoke, saw someone smoking, smoked, or reported intention to smoke.²⁴

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