Smoke-Free policies improve health for all

There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Tobacco smoke is toxic and contributes to the deaths of smokers and non-smokers. Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause heart disease, cancer and worsen respiratory conditions such as asthma. Many of those that routinely seek health care services are especially vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke, including pregnant women, the elderly and people with chronic illness. In addition to the health risks associated with exposure to secondhand smoke, smoking and the use of other tobacco products in public places can normalize smoking behavior for youth.

Establishing smoke-free places where people live, work, play and learn, are known to reduce tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke, and increase the number of tobacco users who quit. They also keep young people from initiating tobacco use and reduce acute cardiovascular events and other adverse tobacco-related health issues. Some studies have shown a link between smoke-free laws and a 10% risk reduction for preterm birth, a 50% reduction in secondhand smoke exposure, and a 3% decrease in tobacco use prevalence overall [1]. Smoke-free policies can also substantially reduce health care costs without adverse economic impact on businesses[2] and promote social norms that support wellness.

Oregon's Smoke-Free policies

Oregon has an existing smoke-free workplace law, including bars and restaurants. However, local jurisdictions like yours have a big role to play in enforcing and expanding smoke-free policies as they have the authority to pass local policies. Local jurisdictions in Oregon can choose to enact comprehensive local ordinances prohibiting smoking and vaping in all indoor and outdoor workplaces and public places, although smoke-free legislation has often faced opposition from those with a financial interest in tobacco sales.

Smoke-Free Policies

Health care partners can partner on Smoke-Free policies to boost Impact

Health care partners can be important partners and advocates in passing local smoke-free laws. Health care providers often bring a credible, trusted, unbiased perspective to tobacco policy conversations. Health care partners are also generally prominent or influential in their local community. Their clinical experience gives them firsthand knowledge of the needs and challenges of patients that use tobacco. Local tobacco coalitions often report that involving health care providers, especially physicians, in efforts to pass smoke-free laws boosts their chances of success.

Within Oregon's Medicaid system, both Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) and other health care providers are held accountable for reductions in tobacco use prevalence in their populations, with substantial financial benefits for achieving success in reducing cigarette smoking as measured by performance on the tabacco incentive metric. Smoke-free policies can accelerate efforts to help patients quit with counseling and medications if the environments they spend the most time in are smoke-free. Several CCO administrative, contractor, and hospital campuses in Oregon have already gone tobacco-free to promote better health and a safer environment for patients, providers and other staff.

What can I do as a TPEP coordinator to engage health care partners in Smoke-Free policies?

Health care partners, including CCOs, can provide leadership for development of smoke-free policies in their own or other workplaces and in public spaces in the communities they serve. They can also lend a persuasive voice to efforts to develop public-sector regulations that prohibit tobacco use in public areas.

Some specific things Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP) programs can do with local health care partners and CCOs to uphold and expand smoke-free policies include:

- Ensure all health care facilities are smoke-free to protect the health of staff, patients and visitors.
- Collaborate to ensure all work and public places in communities are smoke-free for the protection of everyone, including a health partners patient population
- Partner to implement a tobacco-free campus policy for CCO administrative offices

- Provide support to health partners or CCOs so they have the resources to require their contracted providers to adopt tobacco-free campus policies

- Provide health care partners or CCOs with the information and tools so that they can implement supportive practices, such as providing information about tobacco use and treatment, secondhand smoke, and local / statewide cessation resources to patients, staff, and visitors

- Involve your local CCO representatives or health care providers in efforts to pass smoke-free laws, including to participate in local coalitions, testify at public meetings and become smoke-free champions in the community

References

1. The Community Guide. Decreasing tobacco use among workers: Smoke-free policies to reduce tobacco use.

   https://www.thecommunityguide.org/sites/default/files/Tobacco-Smokefree-Workplace-Archive.pdf

2. Campaign for tobacco-free kids. Smoke-free laws do not harm business at restaurants and bars.

   https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0144.pdf

Tips for TPEP and health care partners implementing a smoke free health care campus

Approach the smoke-free policy as a health and wellness initiative.

Collaborate with other organizations in the community.

Form a task force dedicated to enforcement.

Include smokers in planning the policy's implementation.

Anticipate the impact on other corporate policies.

Define your boundaries carefully.

Allow for plenty of lead time but don't phase the policy in.

Bright spot: Malheur county health

The TPEP program at Malheur County Health Department wasn't having success passing local smoke-free policies by working with the city council, so they decided to explore partnerships with local health care providers. The TPEP coordinator reached out to health care providers at seven clinics and presented them with the opportunity to make their campuses smoke-free. Health care providers were natural partners since they were already promoting cessation with patients in other ways. The TPEP coordinator thought that if health care clinic campuses became smoke-free, it would create momentum that could spread to parks and other public places. This approach was overwhelmingly successful, and in just two years, most clinics and now a park and the county fairground are smoke-free.

These accomplishments were driven by the TPEP coordinator working with the health care providers and clinic managers at the seven clinics in the following ways:

- Sharing personal stories of loss from tobacco use
- Discussing the personal benefits the health care staff and patients would realize from a smoke-free campus (e.g., not walking through smoke in the parking lot)
- Highlighting the natural connection between smoke-free policies and health care
- Creating the opportunity for clinics to become leaders in passing policies and inspiring their peers
- Providing draft policies that the clinics could modify to meet their own organization's needs

Malheur County TPEP also shared the following keys to the success of this initiative:

- There is a "snowball effect" that encourages more organizations to participate. To leverage this momentum, amplify the work of early champions of the effort
- Lay out your goals and vision with health care partners early on
- Provide health care partners with resources that make the "ask" easy (e.g., draft model policies, signs)
- Highlight the opportunity for health care partners to make a big impact in their community
- Give them realistic deadlines to work towards and hold them accountable
- Most importantly, don't get discouraged by disinterest or opposition! In the end, the majority of health care partners will be allies