



Steps toward a No-Smoking Policy in Public Housing

Housing Authority of Portland, Oregon – 4/09

Staff education

- Began with line staff, those most affected by the change. Brought in public health experts to talk about health hazards of secondhand smoke, how smoke moves through high rises, fire hazards related to smoking as well as other maintenance costs associated with smoking.
- Talked realistically about enforcement of a no-smoking policy: Expectations of non-smokers will be heightened if a policy is in place. How will this impact workloads?
- Early in the process worked with local public health experts, American Lung Association of Oregon (ALAO) and Multnomah County Health Department (MCHD), to provide sessions for resident services staff and property management staff to help them understand smoking behavior and be familiar with cessation resources. This gave them tools to support residents who smoke and made them more comfortable with the upcoming policy.
- Provided additional education when we were actually implementing the policy, how to talk through lease enforcement, how to handle accommodation requests, etc.

Resident Input

We needed to decide how much input we wanted residents to have in deciding whether to implement a no-smoking policy and how we would collect their input.

- Key to HAP's decision was the resident survey conducted by ALAO and MCHD (see results in the *Memo to HAP Board of Commissioners in support of No-Smoking Policy*.)
- Sent an official notice to residents (see *Important Notice – Revision of the Public Housing Lease*) informing them of the new rule and notifying them of a 60-day comment period during which they could submit written comment.
- HAP conducted resident meetings at all Public Housing properties, with senior management and a public health expert present (staff from ALAO or MCHD) at each, to inform residents of the no-smoking policy, give them the timeline for implementation and allow them a chance to express their support and concerns.

This information has been generously shared with the Oregon Smokefree Housing Project, a program of the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program, Oregon Public Health Division.

Go to smokefreehousinginfo.com for more information.

Policy Development

The details of the policy needed to be carefully thought out. We asked ourselves these questions:

- On what properties would we prohibit smoking: all HA properties, some properties, or portions of some properties?
- On the properties, where would we prohibit smoking: interiors, entrances or full campus?
- If smoking is allowed on the property, would we have a designated outdoor smoking area? If we have a smoking area, will we provide a shelter, receptacles, benches, lighting, and accessibility? What are the budget implications?
- Would this be a lease addendum or a change in house rules? Does this require board approval and a change in the ACOP (Admonitions and Continued Occupancy Policies)? If so – what will be the timing of formal comment period, resident meetings, etc?

Board Approval

- We provided the board with information about our research, details about what we would like to do, the timeline for implementation, and associated costs (see *Memo to HAP Board of Commissioners in support of No-Smoking Policy-12/05/08.*)
- Phase 1: No-Smoking policy for Public Housing units - Our Board approved policy establishes a no-smoking addendum prohibiting smoking inside apartment units, on patios, porches or balconies and within 10 feet of apartment buildings. This policy will be in effect August 2009 for all of our public housing units (37 buildings, 1993 units).
- Phase 2: No-Smoking policy for Affordable Housing portfolio - We anticipate implementing the no-smoking policy for all residents effective April 1, 2010. Following and learning from the Public Housing transition will provide asset managers insight on the process and help them support their property management staff through their no-smoking transitions. Asset managers will be working with their property managers to assess their properties' compatibility with the no-smoking policy and develop site-specific implementation plans.

Resident services engagement

We made a commitment to assisting residents with the transition to the no-smoking policy.

- Resident Service Coordinators will be provided with training to assist residents through this transition.
- We worked with the American Lung Association in Oregon to develop a smoking cessation program for residents to help them adjust to the new policy.
- Staff will be provided with supplementary materials to make available to residents such as a detailed list of smoking cessation community resources and supplementary pamphlets on the risks of secondhand smoke and smoking.

Enforcement plan

The new no smoking policy is anticipated to have varying levels of tenant compliance and will be an additional piece for site staff to enforce. The following is an outline of our enforcement plan:

- **1st violating** - verbal warning followed by smoking cessation materials
- **2nd violation** - verbal warning followed by smoking cessation materials and a referral to the Resident Services Coordinator (if available)
- **3rd violation** - written warning letter with smoking cessation materials and a referral to the Resident Services Coordinator (if available)
- **4th violation** – 30-day termination notice with option to remedy + referral to the Resident Services Coordinator
- **5th violation** – 10-day termination notice

Designated Smoking Areas

To create safe and accessible areas that are in compliance with the no-smoking policy, most properties will require some modifications:

- Every site will be required to have cigarette disposal receptacles.
- Most properties will require removing and addition of benches and other items to create clearly marked and unobstructed smoking areas.
- We anticipate providing smoking shelters where viable. Design review assessments will be done with other property rehab/capital improvements when applicable. Funding for the designating smoking areas are anticipated to primarily come from the capital improvement funds and a portion from operational funding.

Overall implications for HAP's No-Smoking Policy

- Improve the condition/quality of housing provided for all residents
- Provide site staff with equal access to a non-smoking work environment that all other HAP employees receive
- Reduce the safety risk from smoking-related fires
- We will see an eventual reduction in turnover costs related to cleaning smoking-related damages. We will be tracking the turnover costs beginning with FY'10.