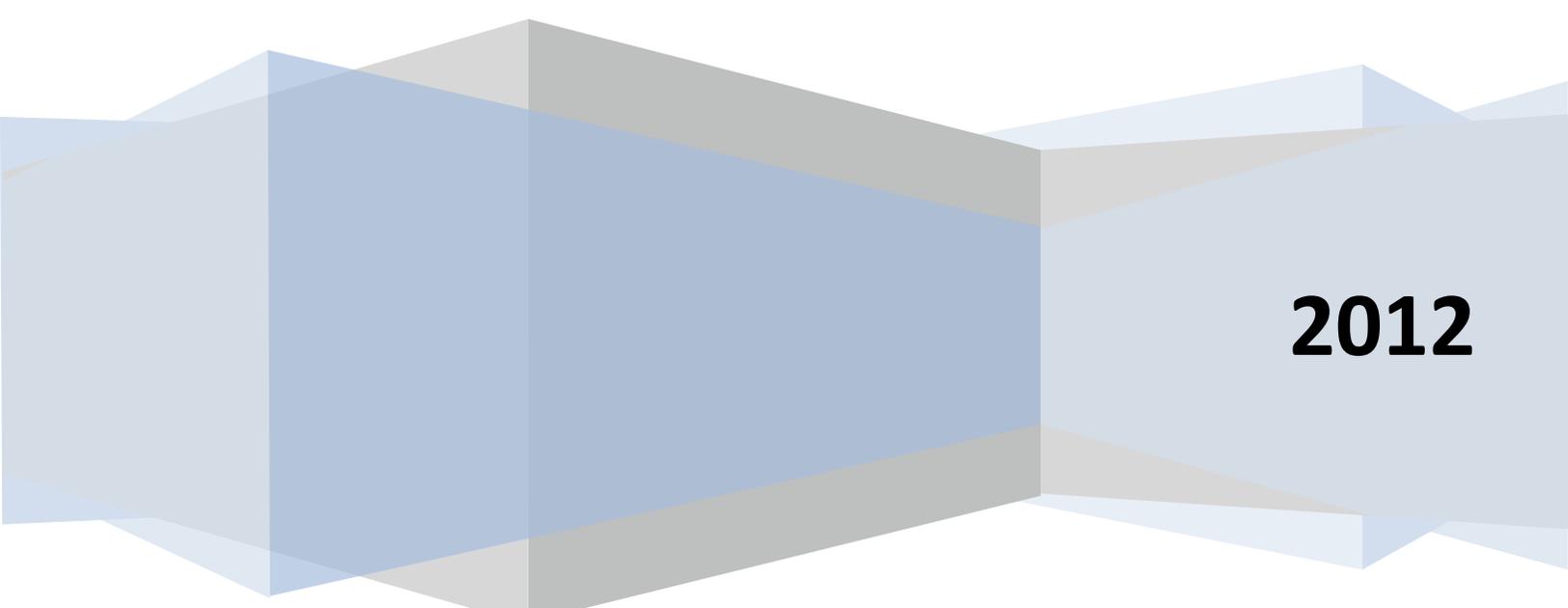


Siena College Research Institute

Survey of Public Housing Authorities and Tobacco Use Policies in New York State

Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition



2012

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Introduction

The Siena College Research Institute (SRI) conducted a multi-methodological investigation of the implementation of and attitudes towards smoke-free policies among public housing authorities (PHAs) across the State of New York. A sample of public housing authorities was compiled based on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's list as well as data supplied by the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition. Research was conducted from April through June of 2012 by phone, mail and web. The goals of this research were to identify NYS public housing authorities that have adopted no-smoking policies and to gauge attitudes of PHAs in order to more effectively address concerns about no-smoking policies. Additional information was gathered to identify those that simply do not have the authority to implement a no-smoking policy at this time.

Methods and Description of Data Collection

SRI utilized two lists provided by the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition: a list of 61 New York State Public Housing Authority Directors Association (NYSPHADA) members and a list pulled from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) website, containing 213 public housing authorities in New York State. While preparing the lists it was noted that one individual was listed as the contact for 21 of the housing authorities. A call determined that none of the organizations under the consultation of this individual managed public housing units but were solely responsible for Section 8 housing units. Since Section 8 housing is owned by private landlords, these organizations could not set smoking policy and were, therefore, excluded from our research. After removing these records and records that did not fit our research criteria (such as those from New York City or those that were not PHAs), 201 records remained. We contacted these records to verify their contact information, to assess what type of rental housing services they provide and finally to ask if they had the authority to institute a no-smoking policy in their public housing. Those with only Section 8 housing (26), no authority to institute no-smoking policies (17) and records with duplicate contact information (42) were removed leaving a final list of 117 records or 109 unique housing authorities. Of this list, 87 were confirmed to be qualified as providing rental services that would allow them to determine smoking policies, and 30 were not confirmed but were included to be verified during the data collection process.

On April 17, 2012 an email containing a link to the survey and a unique coding number was sent to 79 contacts that had provided an email address. A reminder email was sent to non-responders on April 20 and a final request email was sent on May 30. On April 23 a letter with a paper copy of the survey, also containing a unique coding number, and postage paid return envelope was mailed to anyone who had not yet completed the survey including those with and without emails. Telephone data collection commenced on May 8. SRI made a minimum of five telephone attempts for all potential respondents. In total, 59 public housing authorities completed the survey, 31 (52%) completed the survey online, 17 (29%) completed over the telephone and 11 (19%) completed on paper. There were 34 housing authorities that were determined to be qualified but did not complete the survey and 24 that were not confirmed to be qualified and did not complete the survey. Based on those that were confirmed to be qualified, our completion rate was 63 percent.

Date(s)	Contact Method	Completion Method	Result
April 17 - 19, 2012	Email	Web	6
April 20 - 23, 2012	Reminder Email	Web	10
April 23 – May 8, 2012	Mail	Paper	7
April 23 – May 8, 2012	Mail	Web	5
May 8 – May 30, 2012	Phone	Web	5
May 8 – June 4, 2012	Phone	Phone	17
May 8 – June 4, 2012	Phone	Paper	4
May 30 – June 4, 2012	Final Request Email	Web	5

Sample Demographics

- 69% of the sample self-describe as being the Executive Director of their organization.
- When asked what type of rental housing services they provide, respondents report:
 - 83% public housing units (family)
 - 84% public housing units (senior/disabled)
 - 55% Section 8/Housing Choice Vouchers
 - 19% Low-rent units (not public housing)
 - 3% market-rate units
- 86% indicate managing more than one building with two or more residential units not including Section 8 buildings.
- 14% manage a single building.
 - Of those managing a single building, the mean number of units in those buildings is 35.

Single Building Authorities Results

- 75% have indoor smoking rules or policies for the building they manage. 25% do not.
- Of those that have indoor smoking rules:
 - 50% - no smoking in indoor common areas
 - 25% - no smoking inside some rental units
 - 13% - no smoking inside all rental units

The following housing authorities with a single building have no-smoking policies in their rental units:

Housing Authority	County	Units
Dolgeville Housing Authority	Herkimer County	Some Units
Village of Great Neck Housing Authority	Nassau County	Some Units
Village of Greenport	Suffolk County	All Units (3)

- 67% do grandfather existing tenants, that is, allow existing tenants to smoke in their units for the duration of their tenancy.
- 50% do and 50% do not have outdoor smoking rules or policies for their building.
- Of those that do have outdoor smoking rules or policies, 75% have a no smoking policy in front of building entrances or exits and 25% do not allow smoking anywhere on the grounds.

Multiple Buildings Authorities Results

- The mean number of buildings managed is 26.
- The mean number of residential units is 403.
- 70% have any indoor smoking rules or policies that apply to any, or all of the buildings they manage. 26% do not and 4% refused to answer this question.
 - Of those that do have a policy, in 77% of those cases the policy applies to all the buildings while in 23% of the cases each building has its own set of rules.
 - Of those with indoor smoking policies in all buildings:
 - 96% - no smoking in indoor common areas
 - 7% - no smoking inside some rental units
 - 11% - no smoking inside all rental units
 - 30% grandfather tenants while 70% do not.

The following housing authorities with multiple buildings have no-smoking policies in their rental units:

Housing Authority	County	Units
City of Beacon Housing Authority	Dutchess County	Some Units
Gloversville Housing Authority	Montgomery County	All Units (293)
Harrietstown Housing Authority	Franklin County	All Units (113)
Hoosick Falls Housing Authority	Rensselaer County	Some Units
Kenmore Housing Authority	Erie County	Some Units
Norwich Housing Authority	Chenango County	Some Units
Oneonta Housing Authority	Otsego County	Some Units

- 38% have any outdoor smoking rules while 60% do not.
 - Of those, the policy applies to all buildings in 60% of cases and in 40% each building has its own set of rules.
 - Of those with rules:
 - 83% - no smoking in front of building entrances or exits
 - 8% - no smoking anywhere on the grounds

82% of all housing authorities surveyed have indoor rules and 40% have outdoor policies. Most indoor policies restrict smoking in common areas; few regulate smoking in individual units and very few ban smoking on their grounds.

Attitudes and Experiences of Those with Smoking Policies

- Of those with smoking policies, 61% have had smoking policies for five or more years, 9% for at least three but less than five years, 13% for at least one year but less than three years and 15% for less than one year.
 - Those that manage more than one building are more likely to have had long-term policies.
- Asked about five potential results from having smoking policies, small majorities agree that having a non-smoking policy has lessened maintenance costs and that they have received positive feedback from tenants and their guests. While most 'can't say', a plurality, 44%, agree

that there has not been more tenant turnover since instituting a non-smoking policy and 59% say that tenants have not complained about the non-smoking policies while only 27% say tenants have complained. While 29% say it has been difficult to enforce the non-smoking policy, 47% say it has not been difficult.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
Having a non-smoking policy has lessened my maintenance costs	50%	6%	43%
We have received positive feedback from tenants and their guests about our non-smoking policy	52%	11%	37%
There has been more tenant turnover since we instituted a non-smoking policy	8%	44%	48%
It has been difficult to enforce the non-smoking policy	29%	47%	24%
Many tenants have complained about the non-smoking policies	27%	59%	15%

- Ways those with policies inform tenants and guests of policies in rank order:
 - No smoking signs indoors 74%
 - Verbally inform them 67%
 - Written into lease/contract 48%
 - No smoking signs outside 35%
 - Policy referred to in promotions 15%

Asked to think back to when they initially instituted non-smoking policies, respondents indicate which factors were a major factor, a minor factor or no factor at all:

	Major factor	Minor factor	No factor at all
Reducing health risk for tenants	72%	11%	15%
Reducing health risk for staff	67%	13%	17%
Lessening complaints from tenants	50%	24%	22%
Decreasing fire hazards	50%	26%	20%
Saving money on clean up and repairs	46%	22%	30%
Protecting from liability risks	35%	30%	30%
Encouragement from HUD	22%	33%	43%

- The most significant factors cited by respondents were reducing health risk both for tenants and staff followed by decreasing fire hazards, lessening complaints and saving money on clean up and repairs.
- **92% say they are, after thinking about their organization's implementation of smoking policies, either completely (57%) or somewhat (35%) satisfied.**

Attitudes of those Without Smoking Policies

- 35% say they are exploring the possibility of implementing indoor smoking rules.
- 24% say they intend to implement indoor smoking rules in the next 1-2 years.
- 29% say they are not interested in implementing indoor smoking rules.
- 12% say they do not have the authority to implement indoor smoking rules.

It is noteworthy that over half of those without policies say they either intend to institute or are exploring.

- When asked to rate possible concerns about adopting non-smoking rules in their buildings, the most significant concern expressed by respondents is dealing with enforcement issues, followed by encountering legal problems, knowing how to smoothly implement and limited resources.

	Major concern	Minor concern	No concern at all
Dealing with enforcement issues	75%	13%	13%
Not clear how to smoothly implement policy	56%	25%	19%
Encountering legal problems	56%	25%	19%
Limited resources/other priorities	53%	29%	18%
Concern for smokers	31%	38%	38%
Staff compliance	25%	19%	56%
Losing existing tenants	25%	44%	31%
Board disagreement	13%	44%	44%

It would seem these authorities would benefit from:

- Insight and experience of those that have already implemented, specifically showing that enforcement has not been an overriding problem, and
- Clear procedural input on how to implement

Finally, respondents were given the same list of reasons some authorities have cited for why they adopted non-smoking rules. In descending order in terms of which would have a motivating effect upon them:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Decreasing fire hazards | 81% (great deal), 6% (somewhat) |
| 2. Reducing health risk/tenants | 75% (great deal), 25% (somewhat) |
| 3. Saving money on clean up | 56% (great deal), 38% (somewhat) |
| 4. Reducing health risk/staff | 56% (great deal), 31% (somewhat) |
| 5. Encouragement from HUD | 56% (great deal), 25% (somewhat) |
| 6. Protecting from liability risks | 50% (great deal), 31% (somewhat) |
| 7. Lessening complaints | 44% (great deal), 25% (somewhat) |

The issues that respondents indicate could or are motivating them to institute non-smoking policies are in rank order quite similar to the motivators for those with current policies. Combined with noted high level of satisfaction among those with policies, these motivating reasons can be highlighted in outreach to public housing authorities interested in exploring smoking rules. Additionally, those with partial non-smoking policies can be encouraged to further expand their policy to include more buildings and/or outdoor areas.