

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

BUILD SUCCESS BY engaging residents. Residents can be a strong asset in planning, communication, implementation, and compliance efforts.

Planning for success

Engaging residents during the planning phase is important for a successful policy. When residents participate in planning and decision-making, the results include:

- Policies that work for the benefit of all
- Increased information-sharing among residents.
- Residents feeling that they are part of the changes that are taking place, which can increase compliance
- Feedback about whether the policy is perceived as realistic and fair

Residents may be able to help define the policy, for example, by providing input into:

- **Where smoking is allowed outdoors:** The HUD rule requires a buffer zone of at least 25 feet, but residents may prefer a larger buffer or support making the entire campus smoke-free. Residents may also provide input on shelters or designated smoking areas.
- **E-cigarettes:** The HUD Rule allows PHAs to decide whether or not to allow the use of e-cigarettes in their policy.
- **Compliance and enforcement:** Residents can help determine how the policy will be enforced, and recommend ways to assist with compliance.

Information for residents

A summary of the policy's purpose, requirements, and enforcement process can help increase awareness and answer common questions. Materials should be easy-to-understand and available in appropriate languages. The information sheet can be:

- Distributed at meetings when the policy is introduced, and in subsequent meetings to reinforce key information
- Mailed or delivered to each individual unit
- Posted in public areas

Communicate early, communicate often

Begin communicating with residents as much in advance as possible so they feel informed and part of the process. Include these key messages whenever information is provided to residents, to help address concerns and prevent misperceptions:

- The purpose of the policy is to protect the health of residents and staff.
- Smokers are not required to stop smoking, but they cannot smoke inside or within 25 feet of the building. The policy is "smoke-free," not "smoker free."

Build on existing or popular communication channels with residents to provide them with clear information in a variety of formats and in appropriate languages.

Meetings

More than 70% of the PHAs we surveyed hosted resident information sessions. Public meetings with residents provide opportunities to present information about the benefits of smoke-free housing, explain the policy requirements, distribute printed information, answer questions, clarify misperceptions, and invite feedback.

Meetings also provide a forum in which residents may help demonstrate the importance of the policy by sharing their own stories about how secondhand smoke affects them or their families.

One-on-one

Private conversations offer effective opportunities for residents to discuss their questions and concerns with housing staff, if they are not comfortable or able to do so publicly. Let residents know how to contact the appropriate housing staff, and train staff to provide consistent, clear information and to respond to residents with empathy and respect.

Online

Post the policy and other informational resources on the property website and provide contact information for residents who may have questions.

Keep communicating

Ongoing communication is important for long-term implementation success.

- Periodically review the policy in regular meetings or other communications with residents, such as newsletters (68% of surveyed residents reported having read about the smoke-free policy in the property newsletter).
- Remind residents of the policy when new or renewal leases are signed.
- Listen and respond to resident concerns, elicit their feedback about how it's working, and stay open to their suggestions.

Include residents in compliance and cessation efforts

Residents can be your strongest asset while implementing the policy and can assist with compliance by sharing information, helping other residents understand the purpose of the policy, and reporting suspected violations.

They can also help provide cessation support, for example, by providing encouragement and support to people who are considering or attempting to stop smoking, and by sharing information about available cessation resources.

The Building Success project supports efforts to implement smoke-free policies by sharing practical ideas and insights from housing providers and residents who went smoke-free. Learn more at www.BuildingSuccessSmokefree.org.