

Smoke - Free Policy Proposal

Smoke-free policies in multiunit housing are a win-win – protecting tenants’ health while also helping protect owners’ investment. The U.S. Surgeon General has warned that breathing secondhand smoke for even a short time is dangerous. Children, the elderly, disabled, low-income and other disadvantaged individuals along with family members are the most likely to suffer from breathing secondhand smoke.

Financial Return

Apartment turnover costs can be two to seven times greater when smoking is allowed, compared to the costs of maintaining and turning over a smoke-free unit.

Some insurance companies offer discounts on property casualty insurance for multi-unit owners with a 100% smoke-free policy.

Smoking is the number one cause of fire deaths in the U.S..

Legal

There is no federal, state or local laws that prohibit a landlord, housing authority or condominium association from adopting a 100% smoke-free policy.

Smoking is not a legal right. Smoke-free policies do not infringe on the legal rights of individuals.

Smokers are not a protected class under any state or federal law. Smoke-free policies are like any other lease provision, such as trash disposal or pet restrictions, and should be implemented and enforced as any other lease policy.

Fair housing laws may be applicable when secondhand smoke infiltrates non-smoking housing units. For more information, see: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/library/huddojstatement.pdf>

Tenants Prefer Smoke-Free Housing

Several statewide surveys demonstrate that as many as 78% of tenants, including smokers, want to live in a smoke-free environment. Including that your building is smoke-free in all advertising can attract more attention to your listing.

Secondhand smoke complaints and requests for unit transfers drop following the implementation of a smoke-free policy. Nationwide, less than 21% of the general population smokes, so it makes sense that a vast majority of tenants want to live in a smoke-free environment.

Amenities

Including “smoke-free” in all advertisements for your vacant units is no different than including heat or hot water as an amenity.

Many landlords say that a no-smoking rule helps them attract and keep tenants who take good care of their units.

Tenant Health

Approximately 27% of Licking County residents smoke and 29% of Monroe County residents smoke.

According to the Surgeon Generals report, there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke and the EPA has identified secondhand smoke as a Class A carcinogen, the most toxic class of chemicals that are known to cause cancer in humans.

Secondhand smoke is the leading trigger of asthma attacks and other respiratory problems and a known cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Research has demonstrated that up to 65% of air can be exchanged between units and that smoke travels through tiny cracks, crevices and casing, involuntarily exposing individuals in adjacent units.

Smoke-Free Policies

Perry Metropolitan Housing Authority – Crooksville and Roseville – 118 units combined

Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority

Resources

Ohio Tobacco Quit Line – A tobacco cessation resource available to uninsured individuals, Medicaid recipients, pregnant women and members of the Ohio Tobacco Collaborative free of charge. The Quit Line is designed for people who are ready to quit using tobacco, and people who want to make sure they have the support and the motivation to stay tobacco-free.

Quit for Your Health - Tobacco Cessation Program at Licking Memorial Health Systems is designed to help people stop using tobacco. The counselors utilize evidence-based techniques to help participants develop a plan that will offer an opportunity to become tobacco-free.

Put It Out for Good – The Knox County Health Department offers free counselling and free nicotine replacement therapy to combat the addiction to tobacco. The program is designed to help tobacco users Put It Out for Good within an eight-week timeframe.

This information was taken from the Smoke-Free Housing toolkit developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.