

Recommended Timeline for Adopting a Tobacco-Free Policy

To ensure a comprehensive approach when addressing tobacco use and implementing a tobacco-free policy, it is important for behavioral health organizations to provide information about the benefits of a policy and to be understanding of the concerns of staff and clients. Therefore, it is imperative that organizations:

- Adopt a positive and visible presence with respect to the development of the policy
- Respect the concerns of opponents to the policy
- Develop a clear process that engages clients, staff and community leaders
- Work to develop a shared vision of wellness and recovery
- Assess the organization's readiness to implement a tobacco-free policy. (See Employee Opinion Survey)

PHASE 1: Establish a Policy Committee (1-2 months)

1. Establish a Policy Committee that will guide the tobacco-free transition and that shows broad support/commitment for the establishment of a tobacco-free environment.
 - a. Include administrators, clinical staff, facility staff, clients and staff who smoke, nonsmokers, former smokers and representatives of any officially recognized employee organization.
2. Acknowledge the challenge within your organization.
3. Identify the individual(s) who will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the tobacco-free environment.
 - a. Form a workgroup of individuals who will assist in the implementation process.
4. Set a specific date to be tobacco-free.
 - a. It is recommended to avoid holidays and be mindful of other institutional events.
 - b. Consider a fair-weather start date if your organization chooses to replace smoke breaks with 'fresh air' breaks or other outdoor activities.

PHASE 2: Develop a Policy (1 month)

1. Develop three or four simple messages to explain the following (See Infographic):
 - a. Why a behavioral health facility should address tobacco use;
 - b. What the policy hopes to accomplish;
 - c. The behavioral health facility's underlying concern for constituents and how the policy lines up with the organization's mission.
 - d. Include success stories within messages and marketing materials
 - i.e. "Even individuals with behavioral health disorders who are highly addicted to tobacco can quit, and are more likely to succeed with a combination of medications and behavioral therapy" (NASMHPD, 2007)
2. Draft a tobacco-free policy (See Template Policy).
 - a. Define your tobacco-free campus terms:
 - i. Include all tobacco products
 - ii. Define physical boundaries of campus
 - iii. Create a contraband policy
 - iv. Prohibit tobacco use in cars for clients, staff and visitors.
 - b. Revise the Tobacco Policy or scent/fragrance policy to include thirdhand smoke

3. Draft an Enforcement Policy (See Template Policy Enforcement).
 - a. Include actions taken for violation of policy for clients, staff and visitors.
4. Announce the policy to all employees through a letter from the Chief Executive Officer or Clinical Director (See Template Letter to Employees).
5. Announce policy to all clients, vendors and the community a large
6. Involve Human Resources to release internal and external news.

PHASE 3: Train Staff and Educate Consumers (2 months)

1. Develop material documents and begin distributing to employees, behavioral health clients, community members, and guests; such as:
 - a. Company newsletter, all staff emails (See Template Newsletter)
 - b. Signs, displays, leaflets (See Template Signage)
 - c. Post flyers/posters in waiting areas (See Template Signage)
 - d. Flyers in appointment reminders (See Template Letter to Clients)
 - e. Reminders in Pay Stubs for Employees (See Template Pay Stub Reminders)
 - f. Notices in currently designated smoking areas
 - g. News releases to local media (See Template Press Release)
2. Conduct training sessions for all employees (See Tobacco Training and Education Opportunities).
 - a. Train clinical/behavioral health staff to address client tobacco use.
 - b. Train employees and clinicians to assess Tobacco Dependence in clients as part of intake process (See Template Client Nicotine Dependence Assessment).
 - c. Implement integration of tobacco treatment into treatment plan.
 - d. Include tobacco treatment in discharge plan.
3. Consider obtaining insurance coverage for employees of at least one tobacco treatment medication.
4. Facilitate access to Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) for employees who use tobacco.
5. Have tobacco-free policy approved by Executive Board members.

PHASE 4: Prepare for Policy Launch (1 month)

1. Begin countdown to launch 3-4 weeks out so participants can better adjust and comply with changes. Remind staff and clients of key dates and events.
2. Prepare a fun kick-off event to celebrate the upcoming policy for employees and clients.
3. Contact, educate, and assist adjacent community neighbors in becoming part of the tobacco-free area. Consider their concerns in anticipation of the new policy and possible impact on their property (See Template Letter to Neighbors).
4. Prepare media releases (See Template Press Release).

PHASE 5: Implement your Policy (1 month)

1. Make changes to facilitate the tobacco-free environment:
 - a. Install "Tobacco-Free Area" or "Tobacco-Free Environment" or "No Smoking" signs (See Template Signage).
 - b. Remove ash receptacles.
 - c. Replace "smoking breaks" with 'fresh air' breaks.
2. Kick-off policy by:

- a. Sending out a media release.
 - b. Conducting a ribbon cutting and media coverage.
 - c. Hanging signage with positive messages.
 - d. Including community partners.
 - e. Making tobacco treatment counseling available.
 - f. Distributing materials about tobacco treatment resources and benefits.
 - g. Handing out a token gift to acknowledge clients and staff who have quit tobacco or support others to quit.
 - h. Encouraging all employees to sign in at the launch area and have door prizes.
 - i. Decorating with balloons and flowers.
 - j. Having one-day amounts of NRTs available for employees and clients.
3. Recognize those who have helped make implementation successful.
 4. Begin enforcing tobacco-free policy.

PHASE 6: Maintain Long-Term Success (Ongoing)

1. Have regular announcements reminding people of the tobacco-free policy and treatment options.
2. Train new employees to assess client tobacco use during New Employee Orientation.
3. Be flexible and patient: behavior change takes time.
4. Conduct Leadership “Walkabouts” a few times each month at different times and days.
5. Six months after tobacco-free policy implementation, administer Employee Opinion Follow-Up Surveys (See Employee Opinion Follow-Up Survey) to evaluate:
 - a. Employee smoking status,
 - b. Opinion of newly appointed smoking policy,
 - c. Perceived impact of tobacco-free policy,
 - d. Treatment resources used to quit.