

A WIN-WIN OPPORTUNITY FOR LANDLORDS AND TENANTS: ADOPTING SMOKE-FREE MULTI-UNIT HOUSING POLICIES

POLICY STAKEHOLDERS MULTI-UNIT HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

The US Surgeon General stated that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Even brief exposure causes damage that could lead to serious disease and death. The home environment continues to be a leading cause of exposure to secondhand smoke, especially for children. Creating smoke-free multi-unit housing policies will reduce this exposure to secondhand smoke while also reducing unit turnover costs and fire risk.

ADDRESSING TOBACCO IN THIS ENVIRONMENT

- Maine surveys have found that the vast majority, nearly 80%, of multi-unit housing residents would prefer to live in a smoke-free environment.
- Secondhand smoke travels through air ducts and ventilation systems. ASHRAE (formerly: American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) has said that “the only means of effectively eliminating the health risks associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity.”
- Smoking is a leading cause of home fire death in Maine.
- As landlord or property owner or manager, you can legally restrict or prohibit smoking in a rental building as long as the policy does not target a protected class or minority.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Adopt a policy: put smoke-free language in writing.
2. Disclose policy to residents: Maine’s secondhand smoke policy disclosure law requires property owners and managers to notify tenants, in writing, about where smoking is allowed, if anywhere, on the property.
3. Communicate and promote status: Educate residents on your policy and add signage.
4. Monitor status: maintain high awareness and communicate the policy for successful compliance.

WHAT IS A MODEL POLICY?

A model smoke-free housing policy prohibits the smoking of any lighted cigarette, cigar, hookah, electronic smoking device or other tobacco product, marijuana, or illegal substance in any area of the property, both private and common, whether enclosed or outdoors. This policy applies to all owners, tenants, guests, and servicepersons.

RESOURCES

- Local District Tobacco Prevention Partner – usually located at a local Community Coalition, the DTPP can provide technical assistance on policy adoption and implementation and provide tips on creating tobacco-free environments.
- www.BreatheEasyMaine.org - includes many resources available for download including template smoke-free policy and lease language, fact sheets, enforcement tips, and infographic.
- Smoke-free housing signage is available at no cost from www.BreatheEasyMaine.org as a compliance tool and incentive for Maine landlords.