

SECTION 2: COMMITMENT TO A TRULY TOBACCO-FREE ENVIRONMENT

REASONS SCHOOLS SHOULD BE TOBACCO-FREE

REASON 1: A BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS

- Tobacco use at school distracts from learning. Student tobacco use at school is linked to school failure and truancy.¹
- A tobacco-free school represents a firm commitment by the school administration and staff to prohibit tobacco use by students, employees, and visitors.

REASON 2: POSITIVE ROLE MODELING BY EMPLOYEES, VISITORS, AND PEERS

- A 2003 study found that students were more likely to smoke in a location where they saw other students and adults smoking. Tobacco-free schools provide opportunities for adults and peers to serve as tobacco-free role models.²
- All school staff members have the responsibility to serve as positive role models for students by not using any tobacco products or e-cigarettes at school or any school sponsored events, including off-site events.

REASON 3: ELIMINATES EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE

- Secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard and there is no safe level of exposure.³
- Whether indoors or outdoors, breathing even a small amount of secondhand smoke can have serious health consequences. Students with asthma or other breathing problems can have their condition triggered by secondhand smoke. Additionally, as little as 30 minutes of exposure to secondhand smoke can affect coronary arteries of healthy, young nonsmokers.^{4,5,6}

REASON 4: PROTECTS CHILDREN FROM DEVELOPING AN ADDICTION TO A DANGEROUS DRUG

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration classifies nicotine, found in tobacco products and e-cigarettes, as a drug. School policies do not allow the use of other drugs, such as alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine on school grounds or at school-sponsored events.
- Out of three young people who smoke in their teen years will die of a tobacco-related disease.⁷
- Almost 90% of adult smokers started smoking before they turned 18. If we can keep youth tobacco-free until age 18, most will never start using tobacco.⁸

REASON 5: COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS

- The Federal Pro Children Act of 1994 states: "No person shall permit smoking within any indoor facility utilized for services to kindergarten, elementary, or secondary education or library services to children." This applies to all schools and programs that are funded by the federal government or through state and local governments.
- The Code of Virginia prohibits smoking in elementary, intermediate and secondary school buildings (§ 15.2-2824) and requires, "Each school board shall develop and implement a policy to prohibit the use of electronic cigarettes on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity" (§ 22.1-79.5) by July 1, 2015.

