

SECTION 2: COMMITMENT TO A TRULY TOBACCO-FREE ENVIRONMENT

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

KEY MESSAGES:

- Tobacco-free schools provide the best learning environment for students and a healthier environment for everyone.
- Tobacco-free schools provide positive role modeling for students. Schools are a place where children develop lifelong behaviors – smoking or chewing tobacco and/or using an e-cigarette should not be one of these behaviors.

QUESTION 1: WHY DOES THE POLICY HAVE TO COVER ALL SCHOOL PROPERTY, NOT JUST INDOORS?

- Students are aware of what happens on school property and the use of tobacco products anywhere on the school campus reinforces and normalizes tobacco use.
- Tobacco and e-cigarette use on school grounds and off-site school-sponsored events allows students to see role models, such as teachers, using products at school.
- Secondhand smoke, even outdoors, can trigger harmful physical reactions for people with asthma, allergies, and other health conditions.

QUESTION 2: WHY STAFF AND NOT JUST STUDENTS?

- “Do as I say, not as I do” doesn’t work. Teachers and other staff are powerful role models for students.
- Youth that don’t see tobacco use are less likely to think the behavior is acceptable and are less likely to start using tobacco products.⁹

QUESTION 3: WHY ATHLETIC EVENTS?

- Parents are powerful role models for youth. Refraining from tobacco use at school athletic events supports a healthy environment for everyone and helps de-normalize tobacco use.
- The majority of event attendees appreciate knowing they will not be exposed to secondhand smoke in the stands.

QUESTION 4: HOW IN THE WORLD ARE WE GOING TO GET PEOPLE TO COMPLY WITH THIS POLICY?

- Communication is key. Most people will comply with the policy if they know it exists. Strategies include: Have students and staff sign the policy; post visible, attractive signs at entrances, in stairwells, in teachers’ lounges, and near places where tobacco use occurs; announce the policy at events; send a letter home to parents; and engage student groups in publicizing the policy. [See Section 4, Communication, on page 8]
- Enforce the policy. When enforcement is consistent, people are much more likely to comply. [See Section 5, Compliance and Enforcement, on page 12]

QUESTION 5: WHY DOES IT HAVE TO INCLUDE CONTRACTORS, CONSTRUCTION CREWS, AND MAINTENANCE? HOW CAN WE GET THEM TO COMPLY?

- A tobacco-free environment cannot be successful if there are exceptions.
- Ensure compliance with the tobacco-free policy in the same way that other policies are enforced, such as those prohibiting the use of alcohol or firearms.
- Maintenance staff members are an important part of the school staff. Their support of student health and respect for school policies is essential for tobacco-free schools.

QUESTION 6: WHY AREN’T OUTDOOR DESIGNATED SMOKING AREAS ALLOWED?

- Smoking areas provide opportunities for students to see adult role models using tobacco. This makes tobacco use seem normal.
- Smoking areas on school campuses enable students and staff to continue to use tobacco.

