

SECTION 5: COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Policies need to be enforced in order to be effective. Each school or division determines its specific discipline procedures for students, staff, and visitors, including parents. Virginia laws provide guidelines about prohibiting tobacco product use in school buildings, but enforcement procedures are up to each division and school.

One recent study found that enforcement of school tobacco-free policies was associated with fewer observations of tobacco use by minors on school grounds as well as lower rates of current smoking among students.¹⁰

Enforcing tobacco-free school rules consistently and fairly strengthens a culture of respect and caring at a school. Schools that enforce this policy don't accept or allow violations to occur without appropriate action. Enforcement helps to maintain a safe and healthy environment in which authority is respected and rules are followed.

**SIMPLY STATED:
Enforcement
of school
tobacco-free
policies makes
a positive
impact on
reducing student
tobacco use.**

ENFORCING YOUR SCHOOL'S TOBACCO-FREE POLICY

Write Down Enforcement Procedures

As with all school policies, it is important to establish written enforcement procedures that are fair, clear, and consistently implemented. Procedures need to be developed for all potential violators: students, staff and visitors. Many schools find that developing a written checklist outlining these procedures facilitates consistent implementation.

Use Progressive Discipline

School administrators are encouraged to develop progressive discipline procedures for students that emphasize education and restorative consequences as opposed to suspension. The main purpose of consequences for violations is for students and others to learn from their mistakes and make better decisions in the future. Through required education, voluntary cessation support, and parent communication, students can be supported to honor the policy and make positive changes in their tobacco and/or e-cigarette use.

Ensure That All Staff Members Enforce the Rules

All school personnel are required to enforce the tobacco-free school policy. This includes food service workers and custodial staff as well as security, teachers, and administrators. The main role for most school staff is to refer violators to appropriate personnel. Some staff may believe that warning students to stop using tobacco and/or e-cigarettes is better than making a referral. Unfortunately, this leads to inconsistency and unfairness, and undermines a culture of respect and safety.

Designate Someone to Oversee Implementation

The direct implementation of the policy and procedures can be designated to one person, typically an administrator at the school site. This individual should immediately confiscate the tobacco or e-cigarette product and related paraphernalia from the student who has violated the policy in addition to assigning and tracking consequences.



Be Consistent

Enforcement needs to be consistent and fair. Rules need to be consistently followed for students, staff, and visitors. When the policy and enforcement process are communicated to all staff and students, everyone will know what to expect. Schools can also ask students and staff to help educate visitors to the school property about the tobacco-free policy.

Enlist Student Help

Students can be encouraged to support the tobacco-free school policy as a form of pride in their school and support for the good health of the entire school body. Groups of students, such as the Student Council, can be trained to remind their peers and visitors about the policy if they observe someone using tobacco or e-cigarettes at school. Students can also make referrals to cessation resources.

Communicate the Policy And Consequences

Communication through a variety of channels sends clear, consistent messages that tobacco and e-cigarette use is not appropriate or acceptable in the school environment.

Communication should be continual and highly visible. The more positive the messages, signs, reminders, announcements, letters, and newsletter articles, the fewer problems there will be with enforcement. Once the no-use expectation is set forth, there should only be a small number of people who violate the policy. It can also be helpful to communicate the consequences of future violations to first-time violators.

(For more information on communication strategies, see Section 4, Communication, on page 8.)

Set Positive Expectations

The intent of a tobacco-free school environment is to promote the health and well-being of students and staff members. Therefore, enforcement of the policy is meant to emphasize support for good health, rather than punishment.

Promote Tobacco-Free Living

Engage everyone in promoting tobacco-free lifestyles. Celebrate national and state events that support tobacco-free living, and provide opportunities to share this vision with the greater community.

