

SECTION 4: COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATING YOUR TOBACCO-FREE POLICY

In order to comply with a policy, people need to be aware of it. Students, staff, parents, and the public/community are all impacted by a tobacco-free school policy. Therefore, each of these audiences needs to understand the policy.

There are many ways to effectively communicate positive messages about the tobacco-free policy. Aim for clear, positive messages that motivate people to comply. Here are some suggestions from schools across the country.

- **SIGNAGE:** Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, athletic facilities, as well as in the school building, school vehicles and buses.
- **TEACHER-SPECIFIC SIGNAGE:** Post tobacco-free school signage, along with a copy of the policy, in staff lounges or offices.
- **IN-SCHOOL STUDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Ask students to read daily announcements. Involve student groups or clubs in developing and delivering these announcements about the policy.
- **EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Announce the policy at athletic events, meetings, concerts and plays. Involve student groups or clubs in developing and delivering these announcements about the policy. Include a mention of the tobacco-free campus policy in event bulletins/flyers.
- **STUDENT-DESIGNED PUBLICITY:** Ask student groups or classes to design posters, banners and signs to communicate the policy.
- **STAFF EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** Discuss the policy at staff meetings and new staff orientations. Provide annual in-service training on tobacco and e-cigarette related school policies for all staff, including teachers, administrators, bus drivers, aides, food service workers, and maintenance staff.
- **STUDENT EDUCATION:** Clear expectations help everyone follow the rules. At the start of each school year, during school-wide or grade-level assemblies or in a specific class, all school rules should be reviewed, including policies about tobacco and e-cigarette use and possession.
- **NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT:** Place an ad in the newspaper publicizing the policy.
- **COMMUNITY GROUPS:** Ask community groups such as local coalitions and parent-teacher organizations to include an article about the tobacco-free school policy in their newsletters. Provide them with a short article, if necessary.
- **MEMO OR EMAIL:** Inform school staff – or remind them throughout the year – about the policy and enforcement via an official memo or email. Inform vendors who provide supplies, materials, and services on a regular basis to the school about the policy via an official memo.
- **PARENT LETTERS:** Send a letter to each parent or guardian explaining the policy; providing the health, academic, and social reasons; outlining the consequences for violators; and requesting support in enforcement with students and visitors.
- **PARENT TELEPHONE CALLS:** Use automatic calling to inform parents of the policy. This may be particularly appropriate prior to the first sporting event of the year.
- **COMMUNICATE ABOUT VIOLATIONS:** Call or meet with parents if a student violates the policy. Send a letter home with a summary of the policy, details of their student's policy violation, and consequences of this and future violations.

For signage resources, contact info@247CampaignVA.com or visit 247CampaignVA.com/signage.



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TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH VISITORS

Even with signs, written materials and event announcements, some school visitors may not realize that the school division has a tobacco-free school policy in place. This is why all school staff should be trained to communicate the policy one-on-one to the public. Gentle, positive and clear messages will let violators know that the policy is in place and that it will be enforced. Knowing how to effectively communicate the policy will go a long way toward relieving stress that school staff may have regarding enforcement and will help to avoid the negative confrontations with parents, workers, and other school visitors.

TIPS FOR VERBALLY COMMUNICATING THE POLICY

GENTLE REMINDERS: Chances are, the person in violation of the policy is unaware that it is in place. This is particularly true if your school division recently strengthened its policy or enforcement of the policy. Politely and firmly let the violator know that the campus or school event – as well as the entire school division – is tobacco-free.

A RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY: Inform visitors of the reasons for the policy in a positive manner. Let them know that the school or school board enacted the policy to protect students, school staff, and visitors from secondhand smoke, to ensure a safe learning and work environment for students and staff, and to model healthy and positive behaviors for students.

RANGE OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: Make sure that other communication strategies are in place to support verbal messages. For example, visitors to outdoor athletic events should see signs and information in event programs that communicate the policy, as well as hear announcements at the start of the game and between quarters to remind them of the policy.