

BECOMING A SMOKE-FREE FACILITY

Smoking in nursing facilities can be complicated. Many nursing homes find it hard to balance a resident's desire to smoke against fire-safety precautions. Smoking related deaths can create extreme mental anguish for both the families and the nursing home staff, and the courts have been quite harsh in ruling that the facilities were derelict in their duty to provide a safe environment.

Environmental tobacco smoke is classified as a known human carcinogen. Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke places residents, employees and visitors at risk for serious health issues, including lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, and irritant effects in the eye, ear, nose and throat.

A smoke-free workplace is safer and healthier with reduced hazards, risks and costs. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), smoking is responsible for over 416,000 smoking-related deaths annually in the U.S., in which more than 70 percent are to persons aged 65 and over. All the major causes of death among the elderly (cancer, heart disease, and stroke) are associated with smoking or environmental tobacco smoke. Recent research also indicates that smoking is related to a number of health problems and diseases that are generally associated with aging, including hearing loss, dementia, and Alzheimer's. Smoking negatively affects bone and wound healing. The health effects of cessation are immediate and far-reaching.

As a health care provider, it is important to educate and model healthy behaviors. Implementation of a smoke-free property sends a clear message of the commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

Steps to a Smoke Free Facility

1. **Establish a Policy** – Policies often include the following major elements:
 - a. Purpose;
 - b. Definitions;
 - c. Areas of facility grounds affected;
 - d. Resident and visitor smoking;
 - e. Available smoking cessation programs; and
 - f. Enforcement of the policy.

2. **Establish a Reasonable Timeline** – Residents, staff and management need enough time to prepare for the change. Communicate the timeline as soon as possible to the residents, staff, physicians, other contracted employees and/or visitors. Post the timeline in staff break rooms, resident common areas and where visitors sign in for a visit.
3. **Education and Training** – This includes education on how to implement the policy in the daily activities of the residents, providing cessation programs and resources for cessation assistance. Staff also will need to be trained on how to report anyone not following the non-smoking policy and how to manage the violators during the off-shift hours.
4. **Communication of the Smoke Free Policy** – Focus on the policy, not the smokers. Include in the message the cessation options which will be available for the residents and staff, if the facility chooses to assist staff with smoking cessation. And, reinforce in a firm message the policy will be implemented, supported and enforced.
5. **Ongoing Quality Assurance** – As with all policies, the smoking policy will need ongoing monitoring, re-evaluations and education, as new issues develop or state laws supersede current policies. Confer with your legal counsel once you have developed the facility's smoking policies and have them review all policies, timelines and communications.
6. **Check with State Regulating Agencies** – Confer with the local authorities on what you are allowed to do with residents who do not want to stop smoking and reside in your building.
7. **Inform Prospective Residents** – Moving forward, make potential residents aware of your policy before they are admitted to the facility. Let them know that if residents try to resume smoking at any point during their stay, you will assist them in relocating to another facility that allows smoking.
8. **Confer** – Discuss your plan with your state's regulatory agency and legal counsel. Review Life Safety Code requirements when developing your facility's smoking policies, and train your staff accordingly.

© 2012 GuideOne Risk Resources for Health Care, LLC. All rights reserved.

This material is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice, nor are any suggested checklists or actions plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions.

You are encouraged to consult with your own attorney or other expert consultants for a professional opinion specific to your situation.



GuideOne Risk Resources for Health Care
1111 Ashworth Road
West Des Moines, Iowa 50265
1-800-688-3628