

More Frequently Asked Questions

How are 12-Step groups affected by Oklahoma's new laws on smoking in public places and indoor workplaces?

Many people have inquired regarding smoking at meetings of 12-step groups such as alcoholics anonymous group meetings. The situations vary, but these general principles apply under the new state laws that became effective September 1, 2003.

- *There is not an exemption in the new laws for alcoholics anonymous or other 12-step organizations. The ability to permit smoking is dependent on where the meeting is conducted.*
- *By the nature of these organizations and their open door policies extending an invitation to all who share an addiction, meeting places of these groups are public places under these laws whether they are "public" meetings (open to all) or "closed" meetings (open to addicts only). Most meeting places also fall within the new laws' definition of indoor workplaces.*
- *If the meetings are held in a place where smoking is permitted under the law, smoking may be permitted during the meeting. Examples of places where smoking is permitted would be in a private residence or in a restaurant that permits smoking (permissible only until March 1, 2006, unless the restaurant has a special smoking room after that date).*
- *If the meetings are held in a place where smoking is not permitted under the law, smoking may not be permitted during an indoor meeting, even if the group is identified by the 12-step organization as an all-smoking group.*
- *Smoking can be permitted outside the building or within a special smoking room, provided this is consistent with the law and with policies of the place. There are legal restrictions on outdoor smoking near entrances, exits and air intakes of city, county and state buildings and on the campuses of "educational facilities" as defined in the law. Otherwise, property owners or managers may adopt policies further restricting smoking outdoors on their property. The new laws include requirements for enclosed and separately ventilated smoking rooms to be used only for smoking.*

Many meetings of these groups have been identified in the past as smoking or nonsmoking groups. However, unless these meetings occur in places exempted from the new laws, smoking can no longer be permitted during the meetings---which typically last just an hour---if they are indoors.

Copies of Oklahoma's secondhand smoke laws, a summary of the laws and related information can be found at an internet web site maintained by the Oklahoma State Department of Health: www.breatheeasyok.com. Or these materials can be provided by mail upon telephone request to the toll-free number 1-866-ONLY AIR (1-866-665-9247).