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TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOLS POLICY GUIDE

OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ... TOBACCO USE PREVENTION SERVICE



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Oklahoma State Department of Health
Tobacco Use Prevention Service

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Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn

Part I:
Physical Activity,
Healthy Eating, and
Tobacco-Use
Prevention



A SCHOOL HEALTH POLICY GUIDE

24/7 Tobacco-free Schools



Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to assist schools in establishing a 24/7 tobacco-free environment for students, staff and visitors. The guide is a resource for concerned boards of education, superintendents, safe and drug free school coordinators, safe school committees, healthy and fit school advisory committees, students, parents, community, and coalition members –anyone willing and interested in collaborating together in creating an environment that supports health.

Within this guide, a 24/7 tobacco-free environmental policy refers to a policy that totally prohibits the use of tobacco in any form, by any persons, at any places, any times (including non-school hours) while on school grounds and during any school sponsored functions held off campus.

The significance of the tobacco problem is that:

- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in our nation.¹
- Tobacco-related disease is Oklahoma's leading preventable cause of death killing an estimated 5,700 Oklahomans each year, or an average of 16 per day---more than alcohol, car accidents, AIDS, violent crime, heroin, cocaine and crack combined.²
- Every day, an average of 40 Oklahoma children become regular smokers. Roughly one of every three will die prematurely as a result. If current trends continue, of the 878,000 Oklahoma children now under the age of 18, about 200,000 are already or will become regular smokers.²
- Smoking costs Oklahoma \$907 million in direct medical expenditures and an additional \$1.3 billion in productivity losses each year.

- Combined, the annual costs of smoking related diseases in Oklahoma now exceed \$2.2 billion, or an average of more than \$600 per Oklahoman. Costs to the state for tobacco related illnesses are staggering.³
- It is essential to realize that the consequences of tobacco use go beyond the individual user to become an economic burden shared by all.

Since most smoking is initiated by persons less than 18 years of age, programs that prevent the onset of smoking during the school years are crucial.^{4, 5, 6} If smoking is prevented during childhood and adolescence, it is unlikely it will be initiated in adulthood.⁶

Many experts refer to tobacco related diseases as pediatric diseases because most adult users began at a young age with the consequences manifesting themselves as disease and death later in life. Nationally, 90 percent of smokers start by age 18.

Clearly articulated school policies, applied fairly and consistently, can help students decide not to use tobacco.⁷ Most effective in reducing tobacco use among students are policies that prohibit tobacco use on school property, ones that require prevention education, and ones that provide access to cessation programs rather than solely instituting punitive measures.⁸

Proven Strategies

Over the years researchers have documented practices and principles associated with successful and effective school-based tobacco prevention programs. These principles are listed in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction*.⁹ Again, these guidelines have been proven to be effective in preventing tobacco use among youth and summarize comprehensive, multi-component, school-based strategies that address the entire environment of young people.

The prevention of youth tobacco initiation is dependent upon many different strategies working together; therefore; school programs should be linked to other community based ongoing tobacco control efforts. Regarding the school guidelines, the individual strategies work together and fit into one basic fundamental, comprehensive package.

Schools can take a two-prong approach to tobacco prevention. The first approach is the teaching of tobacco prevention curricula to students. This is referred to as an individual approach. The second approach is the

environmental approach, which focuses on the norms and culture that are promoted on school property.

Evaluation data from around the country clearly shows that the results of the teaching of books alone (individual approach) have been disappointing. Data also shows that, for school-based tobacco prevention to be as successful as they can be, the broader social environment needs to support the classroom prevention message. Specifically, the behavior of adults has to support and reinforce the prevention message, which is taught to the students. In summary, to achieve maximum results, the individual approach should occur within an environmental approach, which backs up the individual approach.

Regarding tobacco use prevention, does your school send a confusing and inconsistent message to the youth or a clear, consistent and congruent message? When the behavior of adults contradicts what the students are taught, then the classroom prevention message is undermined and credibility is lost. The end result is that the effectiveness of the program is compromised. Again, program evaluation data is very clear on this. A 24/7 tobacco free policy is fundamental in any school effort designed to prevent or reduce tobacco use in students.

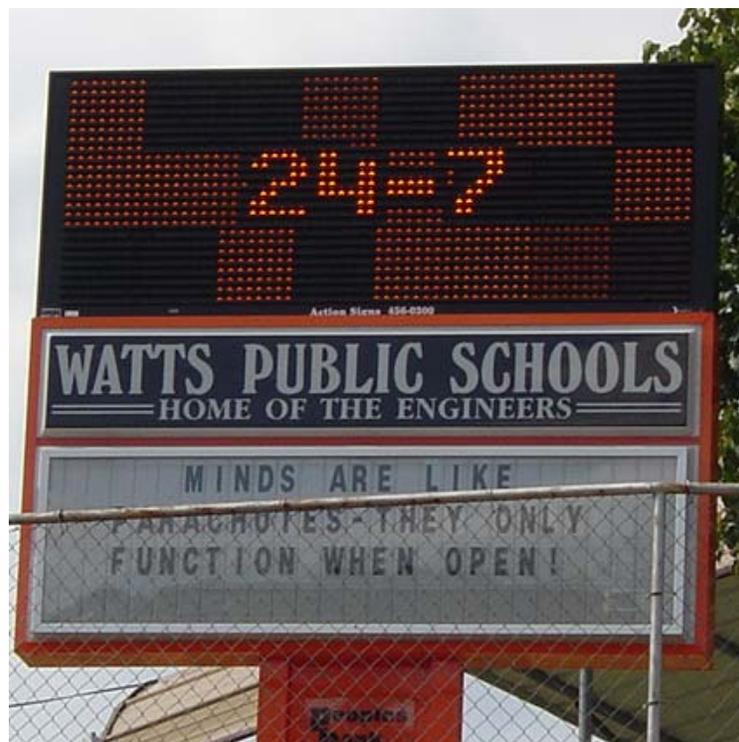
Much of the recent prevention research has focused on normative education. When young people think that their friends and society at large act a certain way, they're inclined to act similarly. In essence, kids inherit and are socialized into the norms of their community and culture. For this reason, the environmental approach in and of itself can make an impact. The same can't be said for the individual approach when it is done by itself. Books and activities aren't the "single magic bullet" of tobacco prevention. Policy and norms are much closer than books to approaching being the single magic bullet of tobacco prevention.

A 24/7 policy is a step that won't be extinguished. A guest speaker coming to school won't have a lasting impact when compared to a change in policy, which represents a new way of looking at something. A change in policy signifies a cultural and norm shift, which leads to tobacco being viewed differently by the society at large. This new norm creates inescapable pressure not to use tobacco.

School based success is determined by multiple activities and components being combined with one another. In Oregon, evaluation data showed a "dose response" between the prevalence of smoking among eighth graders and the level of implementation of the above-mentioned CDC Guidelines to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction.

In summary, eighth graders were only half as likely to smoke in schools that implemented all of the guidelines as compared to eighth grade students whose schools implemented two or fewer of the guidelines.¹⁰ Comprehensive tobacco control programs aim to involve a range of coordinated and coexisting tobacco control strategies, so that they reinforce and compliment each other in a synergistic fashion.¹¹

If a school district does not have access to available resources to fully implement a comprehensive program as described within the CDC guidelines, then focusing on and adopting a policy which prohibits the use of tobacco 24/7 is still desirable. Further, adoption of a 24/7 tobacco-free school policy will lay the foundation for future implementation of additional tobacco prevention efforts within the school.



Rationale for a 24/7 Tobacco-Free School

- Schools must play an essential role in communicating to young people a tobacco-free message through school policy.¹²
- Schools create powerful environments for promoting non-smoking norms.¹³
- Schools have a responsibility to help prevent tobacco use for the sake of students' and staff members' health and the well-being of their families.¹⁴
- Adoption of a tobacco-free policy broadcasts a clear message to students, staff, parents, and the community that school leaders consider the issue important.¹⁵
- The school environment is a persuasive teacher; which can demonstrate, reinforce and support the lessons taught in the classroom, or it can contradict, undermine and discount those lessons.
- A tobacco-free environment is fundamental in any school effort designed to prevent or reduce tobacco addiction in young people.¹⁶

Key Principles for Effective School Policies

- Prohibit tobacco use at all school facilities and events.
- Encourage and help students and staff to quit using tobacco.
- Provide developmentally appropriate instruction in grades k-12 that addresses the social and psychological cause of tobacco use.
- Are part of a coordinated school health program through which teachers, students, families, administrators and community leaders deliver consistent messages about tobacco use.
- Are reinforced by community-wide efforts to prevent tobacco use and addiction.

What Does Oklahoma Law Say?

In November of 2000, the *Smoking in Public Places Act* established a minimum guideline for schools regarding tobacco use. The 2003 version of this law can be viewed on the Oklahoma State Department of Health website: www.breatheeasyok.com

Section 1-521

1. "Educational facility" means a building owned, leased or under control of a public or private school system, college or university.

Section 1-1523

B. 1. Except as otherwise provided in paragraph 2 of this subsection, an educational facility which offers an early childhood education program or in which children in grades kindergarten through twelve are educated shall prohibit smoking, the use of snuff, chewing tobacco or any other form of tobacco product in the buildings and on school grounds of the facility by all persons including, but not limited to, full-time, part-time, and contract employees, during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., during the school session, or when class or any program established for students is in session.

3. An educational facility may designate smoking areas outside the buildings for the use of adults during certain activities or functions, including, but not limited to, athletic contests.

C. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit educational facilities from having more restrictive policies regarding smoking and the use of other tobacco products in the buildings or on the grounds of the facility. (63-1-1523)

In Oklahoma, preemption exists, which is a mechanism that disallows local governments from enacting ordinances that are different from state law. However, schools are exempt from preemption, which means that they are free to make their own policies. Again, *Section 1-523, section C* states that educational facilities can have more restrictive policies if they desire. It's up to each individual school district to take a stand for the health of their students, staff and visitors by implementing a 24/7 tobacco free policy.

What Does Federal Law Say?

Pro-Children Act of 1994

No person shall permit smoking within any indoor facility utilized for services to kindergarten, elementary or secondary education or library services to children. Also included are children's services for routine healthcare or day care or early childhood development.

This applies to all schools and programs that are funded by the Federal Government or through State or local Governments by Federal grant, loan, guarantee or contract programs.

This legislation became effective in December 1994, after notification was issued in the Federal Register.

Any failure to comply with a prohibition of smoking may be liable to the U.S. for a penalty not to exceed \$1,000. Each day a violation continues shall constitute a separate violation.

The Pro Children Act doesn't say anything about smoking outdoors and spit tobacco isn't mentioned. Many Oklahoma school tobacco policies were updated in 1995 and 1996 to comply with the Pro Children Act. These policies, which are over a decade old, don't contain language regarding the campus being tobacco free at all times especially regarding adults. The intention of these policies was to prohibit smoking indoors.

Some Oklahoma policies have been updated with the above mentioned Oklahoma law, which is stricter than the Federal Pro Children Act, yet these policies follow the minimum, that of being tobacco free from 7 am to 4 pm. It can be confusing because the language of the policies can be interpreted to be tobacco free at all times but in intention and practice they weren't at the time of adoption and they aren't now. Clarity of language is extremely important.

Public Support

A 24/7 tobacco-free school policy is not against the adult tobacco user, nor is it questioning the fact that tobacco is a legal product for adults. Although the use and possession of tobacco products by adults is lawful, this does not confer any legally enforceable "smokers' rights" that override the ability of a school to enforce a healthy learning climate.¹⁸ A 24/7 tobacco-free school policy is not about **whether** adults use tobacco, but **where** they use tobacco. It is about protecting students from future addiction, health problems and supporting a safe school climate for all students, staff and visitors.

Antidotal information from Oklahoma and other states relay that some schools perceive the total prohibition of tobacco use on school grounds as a controversial public relations problem. However, what schools discover is that most adult tobacco users do not have a problem with refraining from using tobacco on school grounds. They do not want young people forming a tobacco habit, and they view that not using tobacco on school grounds is a preventive measure, which is part of the broader mission of the school.

To confirm this antidotal information, a study by the CDC discovered broad support for a complete ban on the use of any tobacco product

(including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and chewing tobacco) at school-sponsored events.¹⁹

Furthermore, the number of school districts in Minnesota that enacted a 24/7 tobacco-free policy increased from 3 to 361 school districts, with a majority experiencing acceptance and support for the policy, while enjoying numerous benefits and few problems.²⁰

The progressive Oklahoma school districts that have adopted the 24/7 tobacco free policy have found this to be a move that was widely supported by those that don't use tobacco and those that do. Initial concerns and perceptions of the policy being a public relations problem or of it being very difficult to enforce have turned out to be unfounded. The public support can be readily explained. In 1998, when the Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and the government was signed, a national poll showed that 90 percent of smokers said every penny of the settlement dollars should be spent on youth tobacco prevention. In Oklahoma, 75 percent of adult smokers want to quit. The reality is, people understand the need for the policy and willingly comply.

Change comes about by creating and building a shared vision and will within your community. Plus, the adoption of a 24/7 policy isn't an issue of a school's capacity (need to hire extra security in order to enforce), rather it is an issue of will.

In Oklahoma, school nurses, Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), Tobacco Free Coalitions, Turning Point Coalitions, Safe and Drug Free School Coordinators, Safe School Committees and others have worked on bringing about policy change. Of course, the ideal is for all these groups to collaborate together on this issue to create the community will needed to bring about change.

Benefits of a 24/7 Tobacco-Free School

1. Provides positive role modeling by adult employees and visitors.

Children learn to smoke not only from peers but also by imitating adults. Adults who use tobacco on school grounds inevitably influence students' attitudes by suggesting it is a responsible adult decision to use a tobacco product. To provide the healthiest environment with the fewest cues to use tobacco, schools must prohibit all adult use of tobacco on campus and at school sponsored events at all times.^{F-15}

A 24/7 tobacco-free environment provides genuine opportunity for adults to serve as positive role models for not using tobacco. When tobacco is

tolerated at school, then youth are learning to use tobacco at school. Is this a lesson we want our students to learn? Because of the various behavioral factors at play during adolescence, it is important that the environment, which surrounds a young person, be clear in its expectations and in its attitudes towards tobacco use.

Tobacco use on school grounds is a strong societal cue that tobacco use is approved of by the culture as a whole. The adult role modeling that occurs on school grounds shapes, molds and influences the kids: Beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, norm perceptions and ideals.

2. Reduces children's observation of tobacco use and takes a firm stand against it.

Studies have shown that children consistently overestimate the number of tobacco users. One study noted that adolescents thought 60 percent of their peers and 90 percent of adults smoked, overestimating smoking prevalence by three to four times. Billions of dollars in advertising by the tobacco industry helps to create this misperception.

Another study found that students who made relatively high estimates of the amount of smoking around them were not only more likely to experiment with tobacco, but were more likely to become regular smokers or to increase the current amount they smoked. Oklahoma *Tar Wars* school coordinators and presenters note that Oklahoma fourth and fifth graders usually choose 80 percent as the percentage of adults who use tobacco. In reality, the actual number is about 25 percent. The Oklahoma Youth Tobacco Survey shows that most student smokers start smoking daily in grades six through nine.

Again, perceived social acceptance of tobacco use, accurate or otherwise, influences adolescent tobacco use initiation. Furthermore, middle and high school years are critical in determining whether or not an individual becomes a tobacco user for life. A 24/7 tobacco free school sends a clear message that tobacco use is not the norm and helps correct faulty misperceptions.

Our schools are a critical place where we teach our kids many things. Schools transmit culture and therefore the grounds of a school are sacred. It's true that schools are educational institutions, which don't stop teaching at the end of the school day.

Research has shown that the best way to reduce tobacco use is to focus on changing community norms rather than trying to change individuals, one person at a time. While this approach doesn't rule out educating individuals, it emphasizes making changes in your community's larger

social environment. Community norm change creates lasting population changes. Students base a lot of their decisions on social norms. These are the formative years where they are going to try things or not. The school environment is a non-tangible teacher, which teaches around the clock.

3. Supports prevention messages delivered in classrooms by sending clear, consistent non-use messages.

The school environment is a persuasive teacher: It can demonstrate and support the lessons taught in the classroom or it can contradict and undermine those lessons. Tobacco use on school grounds creates the peculiar circumstance of young people being taught one thing in the classroom while at the same time they observe adults using tobacco on school grounds; this is confusing and creates doubts. Youth instinctively recognize double standards and are quick to notice inconsistencies. Allowing tobacco use on school grounds at any time is in conflict with prevention messages delivered in classrooms.

Making a tobacco free environment the norm reinforces the classroom tobacco prevention lesson and supports an Oklahoma child's decision to be and remain tobacco free. We want to teach both through the academic curricula and by example. Just like you can tell a lot about a person by walking into his or her home, you can tell a lot about what is valued and supported at school by looking around. Do cigarette butts litter the school grounds? Are adults using tobacco during activities held during non-school hours?

4. Protects children from a dangerous drug. Tobacco use is not just a “bad habit;” it is a powerful addiction.

The Food and Drug Administration has classified nicotine, found in tobacco products, as a drug. School policies do not allow the use of other drugs, such as alcohol, marijuana or cocaine on school grounds and at school sponsored events. Why should an exception be made for nicotine and tobacco?

Tobacco is a product that disables and kills. Lifelong tobacco use often begins as a result of a decision made by a young person and young people underestimate the risk of addiction they face. The large majority of adult tobacco users took up the habit as teenagers. The reasons for this are complex, but many teens are not yet able to make mature judgments on health related issues, despite the fact that choices made as youngsters may last a lifetime. By the time maturity and judgment regarding lifestyle choices has taken hold, many have experimented with tobacco and many

are already addicted. This simple fact explains why the tobacco industry and its defenders can't simply attribute tobacco to an "adult choice."

5. Prepares students for the reality of smoke-free workplaces.

Employers are becoming more reluctant to hire smokers, due to increased absenteeism, health care costs and disability. In a competitive job market and nonsmoking community environment, it is important that all students leave their school years without a tobacco handicap. Schools need to prepare students for the reality of smoke-free workplaces because they are becoming increasingly smoke-free. It is important that students leave their school years without a smoking habit.

6. Provides a safe environment for students, staff, and visitors by reducing exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

According to the American Lung Association, more than 535,000 Oklahoma children and adults have some form of respiratory disease. Clusters of people smoking at entrances to a school or school-sponsored event present a significant health hazard to those most affected by exposure to secondhand smoke. Passing through smoking areas may be enough to trigger an asthma attack or exacerbate respiratory problems in these students, staff and visitors.

The adverse reaction to secondhand smoke to those with respiratory disease is usually immediate, and can be serious enough to require emergency medical attention. This does not meet the standard of a safe environment.

In addition, schools are responsible for protecting students, staff and visitors from dangerous products. In 1993, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared secondhand smoke a Class A carcinogen, like asbestos. Smoke from the burning end of a cigarette contains over 4,000 chemicals and 40 carcinogens, including formaldehyde, cyanide, arsenic, carbon monoxide, methane, and benzene. The smoker and anyone nearby inhale these chemicals.

Secondhand smoke is a threat to the personal health of everyone. Even outdoors, secondhand smoke can cause eye, nose, and throat irritations, make breathing difficult for those with respiratory disorders and trigger asthmatic attacks.

A 1999 poll revealed eighty nine percent of Oklahoma adults believed second hand smoke was harmful. Seventy-five percent said secondhand smoke bothers them and eighty six percent, including three out of four smokers, agreed with the statement "nonsmokers shouldn't have to put up

with the annoyance and health hazards of cigarette smoke at work or other public places.”

7. Proactively protects schools from unnecessary risk of future liability by prohibiting smoking on school premises.

Litigation related to tobacco addiction and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is growing. Individuals have recovered damages in lawsuits because their employers failed to provide a safe, smoke-free work environment. With the rise in the number of children with asthma, there may be more cause for concern, particularly if an asthma attack or other respiratory problems are triggered because a child is exposed to tobacco smoke in a school setting.

8. Reduces the risk of fires due to “smoking materials”.

“Smoking material” fires are the leading cause of fire deaths in the U.S. “Smoking materials” refer only to lighted tobacco products, not to matches or lighters. More people die in fires caused by lighted tobacco products than any other type of fire in the U.S. Lighted cigarettes can be easily tossed into school trashcans, especially in bathrooms, placing schools and school children at increased risk of injury due to “smoking material” fires.

Guidelines for Taking Action

Action must be taken in order for a school district to adopt and enforce a 24/7 tobacco free policy. The following steps outline the development of a tobacco free policy. Frame the policy as a positive step in response to a serious health problem.



Step 1. Get commitment.

- Inform the administrators and school board of your desire to review existing policy. Ask for their input, support and cooperation.
- Meet with your school's Safe and Drug Free School Coordinator(s), Safe Schools Committee, School Nurse(s) or others and enlist their support.
- Identify educational, health, and economic reasons for changing the policy.

Step 2. Work with your school's Safe School Committee and Healthy And Fit School Advisory Committee throughout the process.

- Look at the current tobacco policy and assess it (see page 21 worksheet).
- Identify areas where the policy could be improved, changed or updated.
- Is the policy specific to just the student population? Is it specific for no tobacco use for teachers and visitors as well?
- Does the policy prohibit all forms of tobacco at all events on/off campus? Including after 4 p.m.?
- Review model effective policies.

Step 3. Develop a draft of the new policy.

- Keep it **simple** and **specific**. Avoid any gray areas, which could allow for individual interpretation.
- Include a rationale for the new policy. See the values and benefits section.
- Identify to whom the policy applies-students, staff and visitors.
- Identify what is included. All forms of tobacco.
- Identify as to where the policy applies-school buildings, grounds, school vehicles athletic events, etc. Does the policy apply 24 hours a day, seven days a week?
- Identify when the policy applies-during the school day and non-school hours.
- Does the policy prohibit the district from accepting donations of gifts, money, or materials from the tobacco industry or any services, which were paid for by the tobacco industry?

Step 4. Present the new policy to the school board.

- Obtain and submit the necessary forms to get on the school board agenda.
- Select a group to present to the school board: local health care providers, students, teachers and other influential community leaders.
- Develop and rehearse your presentation. A strong presentation includes:

- Information on the health effects of tobacco from credible medical sources. Doctors can describe secondhand smoke and the relationship of smoking to childhood respiratory diseases including asthma.
- Cover the above listed values and benefits.
- Gather support from community members to attend the meeting to show that the effort has broad support. A petition signed by community members can be effective.

Step 5. Once the new policy has been adopted by the school board:

- Set a date, which will allow sufficient time for people to prepare for implementation. Many districts have used four weeks as a time frame to inform the public about the new policy before it's actually implemented.
- Inform the community about the upcoming policy change.
- Encourage students, staff, parents and others to take pride in the new policy.
- Enlist support of community law enforcement agencies that work sporting events and other events on campus.

Step 6. Communication is the key to enforcing the policy.

- Here are some suggested ways to inform the various populations you need to reach about your new tobacco-free policy. Invite youth groups such as Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) to create and make announcements.
- Prominently post tobacco-free signs/decals at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, athletic facilities, and in vehicles, in addition to postings near high-traffic areas like restrooms, loading areas, stairwells, and lounges;
- Place policy details in student and staff handbooks;
- Make announcements over loud-speaker systems at all school related events, including athletic events, meetings, concerts, plays, etc.;
- Request support from school-related and community organizations;
- Send a letter to parents/guardians explaining the policy changes, giving reasons for the changes and asking for support;
- Ask students, staff, and community volunteers to assist in distributing informational flyers at school sponsored events;
- Placing an op-ed or letter-to-the-editor in the local newspaper, explaining the policy and its rationale; and
- Empower students and staff to ask community members to comply with new policy.

Remember:

- Be positive;
- Emphasize the benefits of the new policy;
- Choose bright colors and graphics to get your message across;
- Provide opportunities for everyone to get involved; and
- Show students, visitors, and staff you are concerned about them.

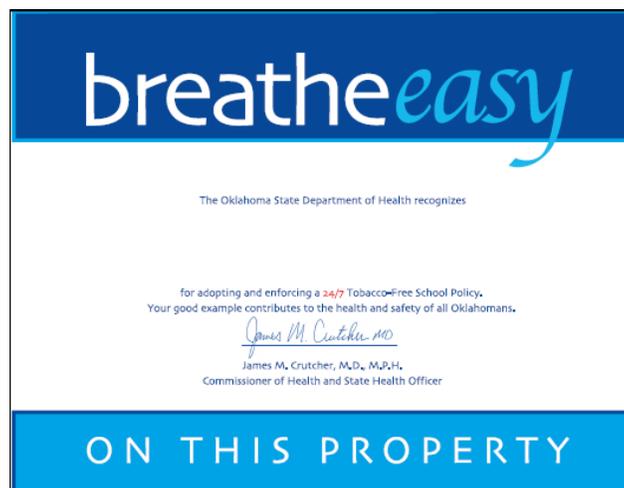
Examples of positive statements to communicate the policy:

- “I’m sorry, but we have to ask visitors to comply with our school’s tobacco-free policy. Our aim is to protect our students, staff and visitors from secondhand smoke and to role-model positive behavior for them, as well.”
- “I need to ask you to put away your chewing tobacco. We have a tobacco-free campus here, including staff and visitors. I hope you understand.”
- “Our tobacco-free policy is working well for us. Allowing adults to use tobacco on campus makes it more difficult for us to enforce a non-use policy for students. Thank you for your cooperation.”
- “Our students, staff and the PTA agree that the best way to create a healthy, positive environment for our students is to ask everyone to comply with our tobacco-free policy.”
- “For the safety of everyone, (Name of district) is proud to have a 24/7 tobacco free policy. At this time, we would like to remind our home fans and visitors that the use of any tobacco products during tonight’s sporting event is strictly prohibited. We appreciate your support and would like to thank you for keeping our school and stadium tobacco free.
- “Did you know that 5,700 Oklahomans will die from smoking related illnesses this year? This is one reason why all (Name of district) schools are tobacco free 24/7. We remind our visitors and fans that all smoking or chewing tobacco is prohibited on school grounds – including in and around the stadium. Thank you for your support.”
- “In Oklahoma, each year, 19,900 kids try their first cigarette, 9,100 additional kids become regular daily smokers. If current trends continue, 77,000 Oklahoma kids alive today will die a preventable and premature death from tobacco use. These are reasons why (Name of district) schools are tobacco free 24/7. This means no tobacco use by anyone, anytime, anywhere on campus – including outdoors. We appreciate your support and thank you for keeping our school and stadium tobacco free.”

24/7 Certificates

Passing a 24/7 Tobacco-Free School Policy is a significant step in protecting and improving the health of students, staff, and community members.

Upon notice that a district adopts a 24/7 policy, a certificate of recognition will be sent from the Commissioner of Health, Oklahoma State Department of Health. Please contact your local Tobacco Control Program coordinator or Dave Wattenbarger.



The Oklahoma State Medical Association and Oklahoma Dental Association also provide recognition of accomplishment. Please contact Melissa Johnson with the Oklahoma State Medical Association. (405/843-9571) or www.johnson@osmaonline.org.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does Oklahoma law say regarding a school's tobacco policy?

In November of 2000, the *Smoking in Public Act* established a minimum guideline for schools regarding tobacco use. The minimum is that tobacco in any form cannot be used anywhere on school grounds during the hours of 7:00a.m. to 4:00p.m., during the school session, or when class or any program established for students is in session.

A school may designate smoking areas outside the buildings for the use of adults during certain activities or functions, including, but not limited to, athletic contests. According to the law, schools can have more restrictive policies regarding smoking and the use of other tobacco products in the buildings or on the grounds of the facility.

Some schools interpret the current law one way while other schools interpret it another way. Due to the differences in individual interpretation schools vary widely in regards to tobacco use after 4:00 p.m. The law is very clear that a school can pass a 24/7 tobacco free policy. Some mistakenly think that the school can't pass a policy, which is stronger than the state law.

Don't we already have a tobacco free policy?

Many policies are clear that students can't use tobacco at any time but they allow exceptions for adults like staff that are on duty at school-sponsored events held after hours. Plus the policies don't mention adults after regular hours. To have designated smoking areas on campus after 4 p.m. does not meet the definition of being tobacco free 24/7. Oklahoma 24/7 districts have eliminated designated smoking areas at all events and also don't allow the use of spit tobacco.

What is a 24/7-tobacco free school policy?

Tobacco in any form will not be used by anyone, anywhere, anytime on school campus. The policy covers all school events including outdoor events. The policy extends to hours after regular class schedules—24 hours, seven days a week. These guidelines are listed in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction*. This policy is stronger than Federal or State law and is a voluntary action taken by the district.

Is it legal to have a 24/7-tobacco free school policy?

In Oklahoma, preemption exists, which is a mechanism that disallows local governments from enacting ordinances that are different from state law. However, schools are exempt from preemption, which means that they are free to make their own policies.

If a school meets the state minimum, what can be gained by going 24/7?

- Provide a safe environment for students, staff, and visitors by eliminating exposure to second hand smoke. Second hand smoke can trigger an asthma attack. This does not meet the definition of a safe environment. Being 24/7 proactively protects schools from unnecessary risk of future liability.
- A 24/7 tobacco free policy will, in and of itself, help establish a tobacco free social norm.
- Positive adult role modeling for students is critical to sending a clear, consistent and congruent message to students that supports and reinforces the tobacco prevention messages that are delivered in the classroom. Youth are quick to notice adult inconsistencies. Having adults use tobacco on school grounds is in conflict with prevention messages, which are taught in the classroom.

Will we risk losing adult supporters at athletic events and other events?

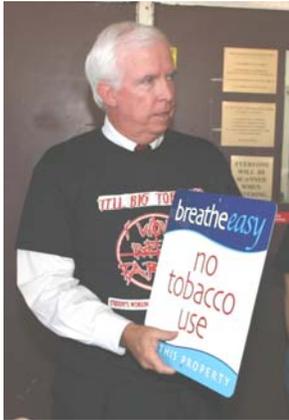
It is highly unlikely that a school will lose adult supporters at athletic events. School districts that have adopted 24/7 tobacco free policies have seen most adults willingly comply with the policy even at outdoor athletic events. A poll by CDC showed broad support for a complete ban on the use of any tobacco product at school sponsored events. Most adult tobacco users view not using tobacco on school grounds as a preventive measure, which is part of the broader mission of the school. For the adult tobacco user, 24/7 isn't about whether they use tobacco but where they use tobacco. Oklahoma's 24/7 schools have found this not to be a problem.

- In 1998, when the Master Settlement Agreement was signed 90% of polled smokers said every penny of the settlement money should be spent on youth tobacco prevention.
- In Oklahoma, 23% of adults smoke.
- Of the 23% of Oklahoma adults that smoke: 75% want to quit.

How will a school enforce the policy?

Communication is the key to enforcing the new policy. Prominently post tobacco free signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, athletic facilities and the like. Experience has shown that if people are aware of the policy it is essentially self-enforcing. Once the policy is adopted, take some time to make the public aware before it is

enforced. Many schools use a month to get the word out before the policy is actually enforced.



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Tobacco Policy Worksheet

CDC Policy Recommendations

1. Rationale: The policy contains a clear explanation of the rationale for preventing tobacco use (i.e., tobacco use is the leading cause of death, disease and disability).

Yes No Could be improved

2. Prohibits the use of tobacco by:

Students 24/7	Yes	No
Staff 24/7	Yes	No
Visitors 24/7	Yes	No

Prohibits all forms of tobacco 24/7? Yes No

Prohibits all forms of tobacco at all school-sponsored events 24/7? Yes No

On school property 24/7? Yes No

In school vehicles 24/7? Yes No

3. Advertising prohibition: The policy includes language prohibiting tobacco advertising at school. Such advertising may include brand name tobacco gear, paraphernalia, clothing etc.

Yes No Could be improved

4. The policy requires that all students receive instruction on avoiding tobacco use.

Yes No Could be improved

5. The policy has provisions for students and school staff to have access to programs to help them quit using tobacco.

Yes No

6. Enforcement: The policy offers alternative- to- suspension for students who violate the policy.

Yes No

7. Communication mechanism: The policy has procedures for communicating the policy to students, all school staff, parents and visitors.

Yes No

Research-Based Tobacco Education Programs

Life Skills Training (grades 6-9)

The Life Skills program consists of three major components that cover the critical domains to promote drug use. 1) Drug resistance skills enable young people to recognize and challenge common misconceptions about tobacco, alcohol and other drug use 2) Personal self-management skills teach students how to examine their self-esteem and its effects on behavior 3) General social skills teach students the necessary skills to overcome various interpersonal difficulties.

Contact: 1-800-293-4969; www.lifeskillstraining.com

Cost: Grades 3 - 6 \$655.00 for all three years; Grades 6 - 9 \$625.00 for all three years

Project Towards No Tobacco Use (grades 7-9)

Project TNT teaches youth to resist tobacco use by (1) be aware of misleading social information that facilitates tobacco use (e.g. advertising, inflating prevalence estimates); (2) have skills that counteract the social pressures to achieve approval by using tobacco; and (3) appreciate the physical consequences that tobacco use may have on their lives.

Contact: 1-800-321-4407; www.etr.org

Cost: One teacher's manual \$ 45.00; Five student workbooks \$18.95

Project Alert (grades 6-8)

The project Alert curriculum is organized into the four parts shown below. The lessons build on each other and should be taught in consecutive order. The concepts stressed in each lesson are (1) motivating nonuse (2) identifying pressures to use drugs, learning to resist those pressures, and practicing resistance skills (3) review concepts and skills. Online training is available and comes with the purchase of the curriculum.

Contact: 1800-253-7810; www.projectalert.com

Cost: One teachers manual with 14 lesson plans, 8 interactive videos (DVD or VHS) and 12 color posters \$150.00

