



Best Practice Working toward a Best Practice Tobacco Free Grounds Policy



As an organization working to strengthen your worksite wellness initiative, it is important to recognize that tobacco use and exposure remain among the leading causes of preventable disease and death in Minnesota. The adoption of documented policies, such as a Tobacco-Free Grounds policy, should be a key component to a wellness initiative.

Worksite wellness initiatives should both surround employees with a healthy environment and engage employees in making healthy choices. By enacting a Tobacco-Free Grounds policy, workplaces do just that. They reduce tobacco exposure, thus creating a healthier environment. They encourage and support tobacco cessation, thus engaging employees in making healthy choices.

Health rationale

The health dangers of secondhand smoke exposure and tobacco use are well documented. In fact, the Surgeon General reports there is no safe amount of secondhand smoke because it contains cancer-causing chemicals and toxic metals thus it causing heart disease and lung cancer. Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be dangerous.⁵ Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that compared with nonsmokers, smokers are at an increased risk of:

- Contracting coronary heart disease by 2 to 4 times,^{1,2}
- Having a stroke by 2 to 4 times,^{1,3}
- Developing lung cancer by 23 times in men; 13 times in women,¹
- Dying from chronic obstructive lung diseases (such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema) by 12 to 13 times.¹

Tobacco-free advocacy

In support of adopting a Tobacco-Free Grounds policy, the American Cancer Society provides the following information in its Tobacco-Free Worksite Tool Kit⁴:

It turns out that more than 70 percent of adult smokers say they want to quit, but without help, fewer than five percent succeed. As an employer, you can benefit from assisting your employees with their efforts to quit tobacco; the CDC estimates that the annual cost of tobacco use to an employer averages about \$3,400 per smoker per year.

Research shows that when employers implement a [tobacco]-free policy, smokers are more likely to quit smoking, which can help them stay well. In addition, a [tobacco]-free policy within your organization will send a clear message to employees and the community that you care about their health and safety.

Implementing a best practice policy

A best practice policy is comprehensive in nature – in that it applies to all work areas and worksite environments in order to best protect and support employees. A best practice policy should be included in an organization's standard, written policies and include the following components:

- Prohibits the use of any form of tobacco, plus e-cigarettes
- Applies to all owned and leased buildings and grounds, company vehicles at any time and personal vehicles while on company premises
- Has a set of enforcement protocols (any supervisor knows what to do in the event he/she witnesses an employee violating the policy)

Tobacco-Free Grounds policies offer significant long-term benefits to both employees and employers and should therefore be considered an *essential* component of any worksite wellness initiative. **By communicating a new or updated Tobacco-Free Grounds policy at least four months in advance of enactment, employee trepidation is significantly reduced, and employees have a head start to visit a health care provider, obtain quit medications and make quit attempts.**

Suggested Timeline for Implementing a Best Practice Tobacco-Free Grounds Policy

	POLICY	COMMUNICATIONS	CESSATION SUPPORT
MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confirm leadership support for a discussion about Tobacco-Free Grounds (TFG). ▪ Discuss TFG policy components. ▪ Review examples of TFG policies. ▪ Contact other organizations to learn about their best practices for enacting policy. ▪ Determine enforcement procedures. ▪ Draft TFG policy, including enforcement procedures. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss reviewing available and/or increasing coverage for quit medications through medical benefits. Discuss setting a date to review medical benefits and update pharmacy benefit coverage for quit medications for new renewal. ▪ Gather information on tobacco-cessation resources (health plan, QUITPLAN services, local classes/services, public health) (Appendix G).
MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss who needs to be involved in policy review/implementation (administration, facilities staff, wellness committee, other). Consider forming a committee that includes current, former and non-smokers to work out the details and help plan implementation. ▪ Review and discuss timeline; set a date for TFG policy enactment. <i>Note: Best practice involves sending communication to employees 4 to 6 months prior to enactment date (as suggested in Month 5 of this timeline).</i> ▪ Send draft TFG policy to leadership for review. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask insurance agent/broker for information about current coverage for quit aids. Ask for specifics on how coverage can be improved/increased. ▪ Consider cessation options to promote or make available: phone based, web based, onsite classes, reimbursement and/or incentives. (Appendix G).
MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update TFG policy based on leadership comments and send new draft to leadership for approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft communication to supervisors conveying that a policy will be enacted. Provide information on how supervisors can support the policy (Appendix A). ▪ Draft Q&A that will be sent with communication to supervisors. (Appendix B) ▪ Discuss inviting and responding to employee feedback. Determine how feedback will be received and responded too. (Appendix F provides ideas/guidance.) ▪ Finalize communication to supervisors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depending upon health plan renewal date, work with agent/broker to get a quote on increasing coverage for quit aids.

	POLICY	COMMUNICATIONS	CESSATION SUPPORT
MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize TFG policy based on feedback from leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft communication to employees notifying all staff of policy enactment. Include rationale for the policy, enactment date, contact person and information on available tobacco-cessation resources. (Appendix C) Draft Q&A that will be sent with communication to employees. (Appendix D) Consider communication about the policy change through employee newsletter(s) (Appendix E). Send communication to supervisors with information on upcoming tobacco-free grounds policy and related manager training. Finalize communication to employees, including enhancements to quit medication coverage, and Q&A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss with leadership the feasibility of having optimal coverage for quit medications (no copy, coinsurance). Determine coverage for quit medications (both over-the-counter and prescription quit aids) for health plan renewal.
MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train supervisors on policy and enforcement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send communication, Q&A, and invitation to share any questions and concerns to all employees at least 4 to 6 months in advance of policy enactment date. Respond to employees' policy questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send tobacco cessation resources (including any enhancements to quit medication coverage) along with communication to employees.
MONTH 6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to employees' policy questions. Draft, finalize and send any additional communication to employees, addressing common questions and concerns. 	
MONTH 7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the communication to employees to reflect < 2 > months until the policy is enacted. Re-send communication to employees along with copy of the policy, Q&A, and contact information. Draft go-live letter for leadership to send to all staff when policy is enacted. Send go-live letter to leadership for review and changes. Post pre-policy signage in all buildings (include map of future designated tobacco-use areas if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-send tobacco cessation resources (including any enhancements to quit medication coverage) along with communication to employees.

	POLICY	COMMUNICATIONS	CESSATION SUPPORT
MONTH 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add policy to company Intranet site, employee handbook, and new employee orientation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalize go-live letter from leadership. ▪ Begin notifying vendors, job applicants, court visitors and jury duty visitors of policy. 	
MONTH 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement policy and begin enforcement. ▪ Place policy in HR procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Send go-live letter from leadership to all staff announcing that the policy is in effect. ▪ Install permanent signage to buildings and grounds. ▪ Remove receptacles (except in designated areas if applicable). 	
ONGOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review policy annually as standard part of the HR policy review cycle. ▪ Consider measuring and reporting progress. See <i>suggested measures of progress in chart below</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report progress to leadership. Consider adding to meeting agendas for a few months as a reminder to supervisors of policy and enforcement procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote tobacco cessation resources at least quarterly. ▪ Promote availability of tobacco quit aids (over-the-county and prescription) at least quarterly. ▪ Promote coverage of quite medication within the health plan benefits re-enrollment materials.

Suggested measures of progress and related data sources

MEASURES	DATA SOURCE
Percentage of employees/dependents who smoke/use tobacco	Health assessment - cohort (time over time) report reflecting same population, or tobacco surcharge on medical premium
Best practice tobacco-free grounds policy adopted	HR / policy
Use of at least 3 communications channels to inform employees of the policy enactment	HR / policy lead staff
Signage installed on property to remind employees and inform visitors of the policy	HR / facilities
Readiness to change to “quit using tobacco”	Health assessment aggregate report
Participation in health plan tobacco cessation program	Report from health plan, where available
Usage of tobacco quit medications (over-the-count and prescription)	Report from health plan, where applicable
Testimonials and success stories (used with permission of employee)	Individual employees / HR
Regular quality assurance checks on the commitments outlined in the policy	HR and leadership