

# Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing

## What you Should Know

Smoke-free policies in multi-unit housing are a win-win – protecting tenants' health while also helping protect owners' investment. The U.S. Surgeon General has warned that breathing secondhand smoke for even a short time is dangerous. Children, elderly, disabled, low-income and other disadvantaged individuals are most likely to suffer from the negative effects of secondhand smoke.

### Definition

- ✓ A smoke-free policy bans the smoking or burning of all tobacco products by all residents, visitors and employees within all common and private areas of the building(s), including individual units.
- ✓ Policies may also address smoking in outdoor areas. Prohibiting smoking a certain distance from the building may help prevent smoke from drifting back in through windows and reduce cigarette litter on the property.
- ✓ Smoke-free policies are generally self-enforcing if all residents and employees are given sufficient notice of the policy change.

### Financial Return

- ✓ Turnover costs can be two to seven times greater in a smoking unit compared to maintaining and turning over a smoke-free unit.
- ✓ Some insurance companies offer discounts on property casualty insurance for multi-unit owners with a 100% smoke-free policy.
- ✓ Smoking is the number one cause of fire deaths in the U.S.

### Legal

- ✓ There is not a federal, state or local law that prohibits a landlord, housing authority or condominium association from adopting a 100% smoke-free policy.
- ✓ There is no constitutional right to smoke. Smoke-free policies do not infringe on the legal rights of individuals.
- ✓ Smokers are not a protected class under any state or federal law. Smoke-free policies are like any other lease provision, such as trash disposal or pet restrictions, and should be implemented and enforced as any other lease policy.
- ✓ Fair housing laws may be applicable when secondhand smoke infiltrates non-smoking units. For more information, see: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/library/huddojstatement.pdf>



Licking County Health Department

## Tenants Prefer Smoke-Free Housing

- ✓ Only 25% of Licking County adults smoke, so it makes sense that the majority of tenants want to live in a smoke-free environment.
- ✓ Several surveys demonstrate that as many as 78% of tenants, including smokers, want to live in a smoke-free home. Including “smoke-free” as an amenity can attract more attention to your listing.
- ✓ Secondhand smoke complaints and requests for unit transfers drop following the implementation of a smoke-free policy.
- ✓ Many landlords say that a no-smoking rule helps them attract and keep tenants who take good care of their units.
- ✓ Over 65% of tenants in Ohio already have no-smoking policies in their own units. However, over 45% of tenants are still exposed to smoke from other units and areas of the building.

## Tenant Health

- ✓ According to the U.S. Surgeon General’s report, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. The EPA has identified secondhand smoke as a Class A carcinogen, the most toxic class of chemicals that are known to cause cancer in humans.
- ✓ Secondhand smoke is the leading trigger of asthma attacks and other respiratory problems and a known cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- ✓ Research has shown up to 65% of air can be exchanged between units. Smoke travels through lighting fixtures, cracks in walls, around plumbing, under doors and through shared ventilation, involuntarily exposing individuals in adjacent units. Ventilation and air purification do not fully eliminate toxins found in secondhand smoke.

## Smoke-Free Policies in Ohio

- ✓ Perry Metropolitan Housing Authority – Crooksville and Roseville (118 units total)
- ✓ Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority

## Resources

- ✓ Ohio Tobacco Quit Line – A tobacco cessation resource available free-of-charge to uninsured individuals, Medicaid recipients, pregnant women and members of the Ohio Tobacco Collaborative. The Quit Line is designed for people who are ready to quit using tobacco and want to make sure they have the support and the motivation to stay tobacco-free.
- ✓ Quit for Your Health – The tobacco cessation program at Licking Memorial Health Systems is designed to help people stop using tobacco. The counselors use evidence-based techniques to help participants develop a plan to be tobacco-free.
- ✓ Many online resources and self-quit guides available