

CREATING TOBACCO-FREE RECREATION ENVIRONMENTS THAT PROTECT AGAINST SECONDHAND SMOKE

POLICY STAKEHOLDERS MUNICIPALITIES

INTRODUCTION

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of death and disease in this country with over 443,000 deaths per year. As youth become more independent, they often take up unhealthy behaviors that they consider more “adult”. We know that almost 9 out of 10 adult smokers began using tobacco when they were adolescents. Less than 1 out of 4 Maine adults smoke. To eliminate the false perception that smoking is an “adult” activity, no age group should be permitted to use tobacco on recreation center grounds.

ADDRESSING TOBACCO IN THIS ENVIRONMENT

- Youth are sensitive to nicotine and can feel dependent earlier than adults. As a result, 3 out of 4 teen smokers will smoke as adults.
- Local recreation groups influence Maine’s children and are important partners in promoting policies for better health. When they’re not in school, children in communities across Maine spend much of their time at community-based recreation facilities. Making these environments tobacco-free changes the social norm around tobacco use and promotes tobacco-free living.
- There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. It travels and is harmful to others, in both indoor and outdoor settings.
- Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the country, adopting a tobacco-free policy can reduce maintenance costs from cleaning up these items.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Assess the current policy climate and identify partners.
2. Develop a policy proposal for decision makers.
3. Present the policy for approval.
4. Put the policy into place.
5. Monitor results.

WHAT IS A MODEL POLICY?

A model tobacco-free policy prohibits the smoking of, or use of, any tobacco products including but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, chewing tobacco, snus and electronic nicotine delivery systems, such as e-cigarettes, on all recreational area properties 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, including athletic facilities, playgrounds or assembly areas operated by the town.

RESOURCES

- Local District Tobacco Prevention Partner – usually located at a local Community Coalition, the DTPP can provide technical assistance on policy adoption and implementation and provide tips on creating tobacco-free environments.
- 2017 Tobacco-Free School Policy Toolkit which includes a policy templates, rationale for municipal policies and steps for change.
- Tobacco-free signage is available for municipalities that meet model policy and can be accessed through local District Tobacco Prevention Partners.