

Benefits of a “Tobacco-Free” Versus a “Smoke-Free” Campus

Unlike smoke-free campus policies, tobacco-free campus (TFC) policies protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke as well as reducing overall tobacco use. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided guidance for implementing a TFC initiative that includes a policy and comprehensive cessation services for employees. This toolkit can be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/DNPA/hwi/toolkits/tobacco/index.htm> and is based on the CDC experience with implementing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tobacco-Free HHS initiative.

Worldwide, tobacco use results in nearly 5 million deaths per year. According to the World Health Organization, if current trends continue, it is predicted that tobacco use will cause more than 10 million deaths annually by the year 2020 (see <http://www.who.int/whr/2002/en/index.html>). TFC policies support the aim of public health to reverse this trend.

The following is a summary of the benefits of a tobacco-free campus over a smoke-free campus policy:

- “Tobacco free” emphasizes the health of all, including the smokeless tobacco user. “Smoke free” is primarily aimed at benefiting the health of non-smokers by reducing secondhand smoke exposure.
- Exempting smokeless/spit tobacco products in a policy (as with smoke-free policies) implies that “It is fine if you harm yourself with your tobacco use, just don’t expose me to smoke”.
- Tobacco-free campuses help change social norms about the acceptability of tobacco use.
 - By requiring tobacco users to leave campus/their worksites to use tobacco, de-normalization of use occurs, significantly reducing the modeling of tobacco use to young people and adult committed to staying tobacco-free.
- Many health/public health institutions are already tobacco-free. The public is becoming accustomed to these policies.
- Prohibiting spit tobacco use (as in TFC policies) helps reduce waste (used tobacco, tobacco containers, spit containers, spit on sidewalks, etc.).
 - The biological waste (or juice) from used spit tobacco creates a concern with sanitation. This waste is a public health concern when disposed of in an unsanitary manner such as spitting into a cup.
- “Tobacco-free” versus “smoke-free” helps eliminate loopholes that might be exposed by the tobacco industry.
 - The tobacco industry has begun marketing products that are both smokeless and spitless (e.g. snus, tablets, lozenges, and lotions), in an effort to gain consumers who cannot smoke in certain places due to smoke-free policies, but are not prohibited from using smokeless forms of tobacco, inadvertently increasing the use of other forms of tobacco.
- A recent study in *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention* shows there is similar exposure to a tobacco-specific carcinogen (cancer-causing agent) in spit tobacco users and cigarette smokers (Hecht, et al—University of Minnesota).
 - Spit tobacco users are susceptible to various cancers and oral health problems. The spit tobacco also contains three to five times the amount of addictive nicotine as cigarettes.
- A tobacco-free policy eliminates any confusion for staff, clients and visitors about what is or is not allowed on campus.

* Modified from the Bacchus Network’s “Benefits of Tobacco-Free Policy vs. Smoke-Free Policy” document.