



# Tobacco Free NYS

## Tobacco-Free College Campuses in New York State

2021 Update

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**Colleges and universities across New York State are implementing tobacco-free campus policies.**

*Since 2005, more than 130 colleges and universities (about 2/3 of educational institutions in New York) have put in place a smoke-free or tobacco-free campus policy.*

All twenty-three City University of New York (CUNY) campuses implemented tobacco-free campus policies in 2012. That same year, the State University of New York (SUNY) Trustees passed a resolution in favor of the NYS legislature requiring all SUNY schools to establish 100% tobacco-free campus policies. The importance of creating a tobacco-free college culture based on respect for others and the environment has taken hold in New York.

A smoke-free campus policy means no smoking anywhere on college property. In contrast, a tobacco-free campus policy prohibits all forms of tobacco use anywhere on the campus, including smokeless forms, and electronic smoking devices such as e-cigarettes. Most colleges are adopting a tobacco-free policy to avoid encouraging other forms of tobacco use and to make the policy as unambiguous as possible.

# Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease

*We can help change this terrible human and economic toll which affects the entire campus community.*



{ **22,000**<sup>1</sup>

**ADULTS DIE** each year in NYS from tobacco-related illness



{ **280,000**<sup>2</sup>

**YOUTH (<18 YEARS OLD)** living in NYS today will ultimately die early from using tobacco, given current smoking levels



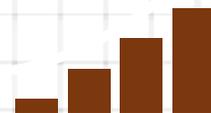
Tobacco-related health care costs New Yorkers

**\$9.7 billion** ANNUALLY<sup>1</sup>



Lost productivity from smoking costs NYS over

**\$7.3 billion** ANNUALLY<sup>2</sup>



## Sources

1. New York State Department of Health. "The Health and Economic Burden of Smoking in New York." RTI Report for New York State Dept. of Health, November 2020

2. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids [https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/new\\_york](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/new_york)

# College leaders recognize the benefits of having a tobacco-free campus policy

## *Why go Smoke- or Tobacco-Free on Campus?*

- Promote respect for others and for the campus environment.
- Send a strong message that health and addiction-free living is important and taken seriously by the school.
- Create an environment that helps students, staff and faculty stop using tobacco or never start. (Evidence suggests that tobacco-free campus policies reduce smoking prevalence among those on campus.)
- Avoid undermining the health of our young people by unintentionally supporting the development of what is often a lifelong addiction.
- Reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and potential liability to the college for smoking-related health problems. Secondhand tobacco smoke is classified by the Environmental Protection Agency as a Class A carcinogen, the same as asbestos, and there is no safe level of exposure. Evidence suggests that short-term exposure to secondhand smoke, even outdoors, puts people at risk, especially those with preexisting cardiac and respiratory conditions.
- Reduce maintenance costs associated with cleaning up tobacco litter such as cigarette butts and e-cigarette waste.
- Enhance the campus' image as a clean and healthy environment for visitors such as parents, prospective students, donors, as well as for the larger community.

**68.7% of people in New York State support a ban on smoking in outdoor public areas.**

Source: 2017 Independent Evaluation Report of the New York State Tobacco Control Program  
Published September 2019

## *Putting a Tobacco-Free Campus Policy in Place Takes Time and Strong Leadership.*

With time and effective leadership, tobacco-free policies can be implemented with high compliance and lead to a healthier, more attractive campus environment. If a college president does not make it a priority, is not a visible champion, and ignores important constituencies, there will likely be significant compliance problems.

If on the other hand, college leadership is fully engaged in the process and is speaking about the rationale for the policy to staff and the various campus stakeholder groups, the tobacco-free policy process will go more smoothly. Once the decision has been made to adopt a tobacco-free policy, the following checklist can serve as a basic guideline. More detailed resources are available via the links listed below.

# Tobacco-Free Policy Adoption Checklist

## ✓ **Form a Leadership Team**

- Assign responsibility and authority for coordinating the implementation of the tobacco-free policy to an appropriate senior level member of the administration. The College President and other senior administrators should meet with key stakeholders about the proposal and request support.
- Create a task force or work group to develop a plan and oversee implementation that includes leadership from the most affected departments, particularly Student Affairs, Human Resources, Communications, Health and Safety, Health Services, Counseling, student associations, unions, Maintenance, Food service, etc.



## ✓ **Develop a plan**

### Gather information

- Conduct baseline surveys to assess current tobacco use among students and employees and to evaluate support for the tobacco-free policy.
- Obtain the existing tobacco-free policy and compile sample policies from other campuses.
- Determine facility and campus signage needs.
- Explore legal and budgetary considerations.
- Consider expert consultation.
- Review tobacco and social justice issues which often resonate with young adults.
- Investigate coverage for tobacco cessation medications and counseling for students and staff.

Develop a timetable (18 months is usually the desired time frame depending on the campus) and set a specific date to implement the policy.

Draft the implementation plan and the proposed policy, have the documents reviewed and approved by the full committee. Obtain the approval of the President and the College Trustees as needed.

## ✓ **Announce the plan**

- The President should send a letter/email to the campus community to explain the rationale and the process for establishing the new tobacco-free campus policy. They should stress that this is a long-term collaborative process of promoting respect for others and the campus environment and that they would like everyone's help to make it a success.
- Announce to the larger community the college's intention to establish the policy and why. Have the critical stakeholders from student and employee associations participate in the press event and provide quotes for the press release.

## ✓ **Educate faculty, staff and students about the policy change in as many ways as possible**

- Develop a communications plan and campaign to get the word out to the campus community as well as the larger community (e.g., website development, President's letters, social media.)
- Provide training sessions for all managers that include clear expectations for talking to staff and tobacco users about the policy.
- Hold separate feedback sessions for employees and students at various times and places. Conduct direct conversations that enable people to be heard while asking them to respect the policy.
- Utilize the campus website, newspaper, radio, email, intranet, campus video screens, short-term signage, etc. to brand the campaign and to reinforce the message.
- Send letters to the local community and all vendors about the change.
- Integrate the policy information into new student and employee orientations.

## **Is a tobacco-free campus policy really workable?**

“ Our campus is fairly large and interwoven into the surrounding community with neighborhoods directly adjoining the campus, so some people were skeptical about our ability to promote a tobacco-free culture and have high compliance with the policy. However, implementation has been much smoother than expected. We had some initial reaction from a few neighbors who objected to smokers congregating near their homes, but working together we found ways to mitigate that problem. The Tobacco Advisory Committee worked hard with strong support from the president and other administrators to gather campus and community-wide input and support for the policy, to design an action plan, and to implement it. We continue to work effectively to make the policy a success. Policies such as this will always be a work in progress. Eliminating the tobacco culture and the resultant lives that will be saved is a goal worth every effort required. ”

*- Devin Coppola, MD, former Medical Director, SUNY Cortland, Cortland, NY "*

✓ **Offer all students and faculty assistance in addressing their tobacco addiction**

- *If necessary, strengthen coverage of the health insurance offered to students and staff to ensure that nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), tobacco cessation counseling, and other treatments are available.*
- *Purchase NRT directly to make it widely available on campus for free or at low cost.*
- *Train all counseling and health service clinicians in tobacco dependency treatment.*
- *Ensure that tobacco education materials are available and that a referral system from health and counseling services to the NYS Smokers' Quitline is in place.*
- *Aggressively promote the available tobacco cessation services, the health insurance coverage, the NYS Smokers' Quitline, and other resources.*

✓ **Implement and maintain the policy**

- *Install well-branded and consistent signage in strategic areas while reserving some signage for problem areas that arise.*
- *Remove cigarette butt receptacles and smoking shelters.*
- *Maintain the tobacco-free policy committee to continuously monitor issues and identify solutions.*
- *Announce that the policy has taken effect and garner earned media to reinforce messages regarding the policy change.*
- *Conduct ongoing evaluation of tobacco use on campus (e.g., documenting cigarette butts in hot spots) and repeat the student and employee tobacco survey one year after implementation.*



“ *Establishing a tobacco-free campus policy made a world of difference on our campus. It led to a reduction in complaints about walking through clouds of smoke in building entryways. Smoking and cigarette litter on campus was also nearly eliminated after the policy was put in place. The process to change and maintain the policy has been well worth the effort.* ”

– *Dennis McDonald,  
VP Student Affairs,  
The College of Saint Rose  
Albany, NY*

## Resources

- <https://no-smoke.org/at-risk-places/colleges/> - American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation provides steps to a tobacco-free college and a list of smoke-free and tobacco-free colleges and universities that is updated every quarter.
- [www.tobaccofreenys.org](http://www.tobaccofreenys.org) - New York State Advancing Tobacco-Free Communities grantees who can provide information, technical assistance and signage to help advance tobacco-free campus policies.
- [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com) - New York State Smokers' Quitline.
- [www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco\\_control](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control) - The New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Tobacco Control.
- <https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/services/quitting-smoking/> - NYC Health + Hospitals Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation.
- <http://bit.ly/1jMI17R> - Go Tobacco-Free is a listserv with monthly updates on the current state of tobacco-free campuses, success stories, barriers; evidence-based research on the topic, and more.
- <https://cvshealth.com/social-responsibility/be-the-first/tobacco-free-generation-campus-initiative> - CVS Health Tobacco-Free Generation Campus Initiative.
- <https://truthinitiative.org/tobacco-vape-free-college-program> - Apply for the Truth Initiative Tobacco/Vape-Free College Program.



**For more information:**

**[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco\\_control/program\\_components.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control/program_components.htm)**

**To find the contact information for your community:**

**<https://tobaccofreenys.org/contact-us/>**

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## The New York State Tobacco Control Program



*The New York State Department of Health envisions a tobacco-free society for all New Yorkers. The Bureau of Tobacco Control administers the state's Tobacco Control Program to reduce illness, disability and death related to tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure, and to alleviate the social and economic burdens caused by tobacco use. The Tobacco Control Program uses an evidence-based, policy-driven and cost-effective approach to decrease tobacco initiation by youth, motivate adult smokers to quit and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.*



The original version of this guide was developed by the New York State Colleges Tobacco-Free Initiative statewide partnership which included the American Cancer Society, NYS Tobacco-Free Community Partners, National Center for Tobacco Policy, and the NYS Smokers' Quitline. This 2021 update was conducted by the NYS Tobacco-Free Community Partners.