

The Importance of Advocacy in Smoke-free Housing

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Advocacy has the potential to create positive health impacts through policy change. An example of this is advocacy efforts directed towards a smoke-free housing policy. These efforts are effective when they include communication on the health and economic impact of secondhand smoke, and engagement with residents, building managers, property owners, and policymakers.

Communicate the health and economic impact of secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing.

Secondhand smoke can enter into multi-unit homes from many places, including vents and cracks in walls or floors. Exposure to this secondhand smoke can lead to serious health problems including lung cancer, heart disease and stroke, and can make asthma worse in adults and children. Secondhand smoke can also have economic effects, exposure to secondhand smoke in units can increase costs to turnover units, increase fire risk, and potentially increase insurance rates.

Engage with residents, building managers, property owners, and policymakers to adopt smoke-free multi-unit housing policies.

Residents

- Use every opportunity available to communicate information on the policy change, why it is being done and when it will be taking effect for example: resident newsletters, notices/bulletin boards in the building, email, etc.
- Provide them with the opportunity to share their testimonials or stories regarding their exposure to secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing.

Building managers and property owners

- Provide them with the opportunity to share their testimonials or stories regarding secondhand smoke related issues and concerns on their property
- There are [resources](#) available for updating the language in the lease addendum, enforcement, and signage.

Policymakers

- Policymakers are servants to the people and should be educated on topics relating to their constituents such as the secondhand smoke exposure affecting tenants of multi-unit housing in their district.

Identify landlords/property owner rights and responsibilities, as well as options for providing services to help smokers quit.

CA Civil Code Section 1947.5-2011 (SB 332) enables landlords to prohibit smoking of tobacco products in and surrounding buildings. It is completely legal for landlords/property owners to adopt policies prohibiting smoking in all indoor areas of their buildings, including in living units or even on their property. There is no legal or constitutional right to smoke. As a smoke-free housing policy begins to develop it is important to have resources available for tenants who smoke and may become interested in quitting. [Kick It California](#) is a free program that helps Californians quit smoking, vaping, and smokeless tobacco.