

Healthy Communities Strategy

100% Smoke-Free/Tobacco-Free Policies

Strategy Purpose

The dangers of tobacco use for smokers and nonsmokers are well established. In fact, per the U.S. Surgeon General, there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke¹. Thus, smoke-free laws are primarily aimed at protecting nonsmokers from exposure to tobacco smoke².



Smoke-free laws also provide benefits for current smokers, as they can motivate and help tobacco users quit and prevent initiation of tobacco use. Studies show that the implementation of smoke-free laws and policies can increase cessation and reduce smoking prevalence among workers and the general population and may also reduce smoking initiation among youth². This is especially important in light of the recent increases in youth electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) use.

This strategy focuses on increasing the number of evidence-based 100% smoke-free or tobacco-free regulations, including e-cigarettes, covering government buildings, grounds, parks and recreation and/or enclosed public places through ordinances or Board of Health rules; and/or colleges and universities.

Why Do Smoke-Free Policies Work?

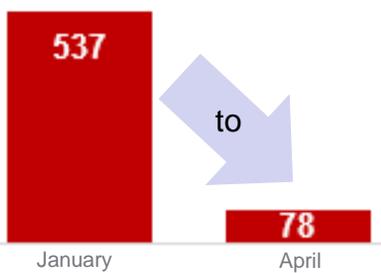
Reduce exposure to secondhand smoke

In states implementing smoke-free laws, nonsmoking restaurant workers have seen salivary nicotine exposure levels drop as much as³



Promote high levels of compliance

In 2010, within 3 months of N.C. enacting its smoke-free restaurants and bars law, the number of reported complaints regarding non-compliant restaurants and bars decreased from⁴



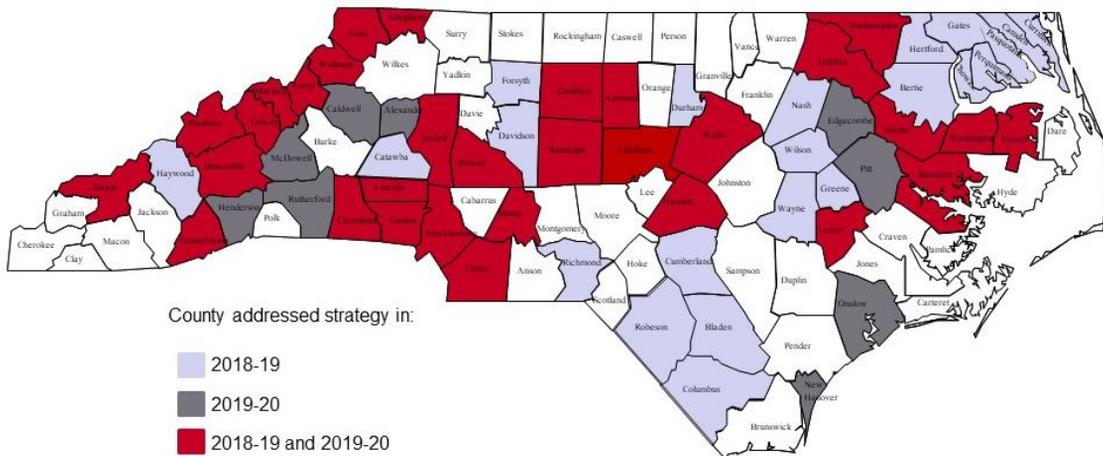
Improve health

During the first year of N.C.'s smoke-free restaurants and bars law, average weekly E.R. visits for heart attacks decreased by⁵



Strategy Participation

48 District or LHDs covering 62 counties have worked on this strategy from 2018 to 2020.



1. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2006/pdfs/no-risk-free.pdf

2. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/protection/reduce_smoking/

3. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/protection/shs_exposure/index.htm

4. <https://tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov/smokefreenc/docs/ComprehensiveEvaluationoftheSmokefreeRestaurantandBarsLaw-FINALAPPROVED-Update-0414.pdf>

5. <https://tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov/smokefreenc/docs/TPCB-2011SFNCReport-SHD.pdf>

Healthy Communities Strategy

100% Smoke-Free/Tobacco-Free Policies

Statewide Results

Since June 2018, local Healthy Communities coordinators supported policy change around tobacco use for governmental buildings, parks, vehicles, and grounds, including those of local colleges and universities. Despite great strides made in recent decades in lowering rates of tobacco use, achieving policy changes to reduce tobacco use in public places often requires ongoing, focused public education efforts given North Carolina's history as a major tobacco production state.

Healthy Communities coordinators successfully met these challenges by working with Regional Tobacco Control Managers to craft policy options for local Boards of County Commissioners, Boards of Health, and garnering buy-in from other governmental departments within their jurisdiction.

As a result of their work over the last two fiscal years, Healthy Communities coordinators led or assisted in the enactment of **12 smoke-free or tobacco-free policies** covering government buildings, grounds, parks and recreation spaces and/or enclosed public places through ordinances or Board of Health rules; and/or colleges and universities.

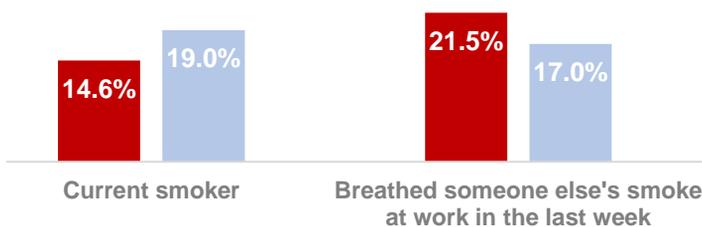
Local Spotlight:

Transylvania Public Health (TPH) serves as a great example for rural counties that have had difficulties securing the necessary buy-in to successfully enact tobacco-free policies. TPH began their work by conducting an employee survey to collect data on ideal policies and their perceived feasibility. As part of their Community Health Assessment process, TPH recognized a key imbalance in Transylvania County versus that of the rest of the Western North Carolina region. Despite having a lower rate of current smokers in Transylvania than the rest of the Western NC region, more residents reported breathing someone else's smoke at work in the last week, highlighting the need for a policy and protecting county employees and visitors from secondhand smoke.

TPH first addressed the need for policy change within their county government by engaging county leaders and staff in tobacco policy efforts. The Healthy Communities coordinator led the Employee Wellness Everywhere (EWE) Committee which served as a platform to engage county employees. As a member of the Wellness Committee, comprised of local government department heads and staff, the local Health Director secured its members' input. During the process, they worked closely with the Region 1 Tobacco Control Manager to educate board members and craft a series of four policy change proposals of increasing strength to present to the County Board of Commissioners in late 2019.

When submitting their proposal to the Board of Commissioners in October 2019, TPH was prepared for the approval of a ban on smoking in government buildings. They did not anticipate the actual outcome; commissioners' approval in November 2019 of a stronger, more comprehensive 100% tobacco-free rule (including prohibiting the use of electronic cigarettes) that included government buildings, parks and recreation areas, as well as government grounds. TPH attributed this successful outcome to involving the larger EWE in crafting and submitting their proposal, and the importance of leveraging partnerships when educating and proposing policy changes to decision makers.

Current Smokers and Exposure to Secondhand Smoke at Work in 2018 in Transylvania County and Western NC



Data provided by Transylvania County's 2018 Community Health Assessment

