

Public Housing is Going Smoke Free

On December 5, 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published a final rule requiring all Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) administering low-income, conventional public housing to initiate a smoke-free policy.¹ The Rule becomes effective on February 3, 2017 with an 18-month implementation period.¹

What Does the Rule Require?

The Rule prohibits the use of tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, or pipes) in all living units, indoor common areas, administrative offices, and all outdoor areas within 25 feet of public housing and public housing administrative buildings.¹

Why is a Smoking Ban Important for Public Housing Residents?

Tobacco smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals (such as formaldehyde, benzene, arsenic, lead, and hydrogen cyanide); hundreds of these chemicals are toxic and about 70 can cause cancer.²

There is no safe amount of secondhand smoke exposure; even brief exposure can be harmful to health.^{3,4}

- In children, secondhand smoke causes ear infections, frequent and severe asthma attacks, coughing, sneezing, and shortness of breath, bronchitis and pneumonia, and a greater risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).²
- In adults, breathing secondhand smoke caused nearly 34,000 heart disease deaths and 7,300 lung cancer deaths each year during 2005–2009 in the U.S.⁴



The only way to protect nonsmokers from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke is to eliminate smoking in homes, worksites, and public places.^{2,4} A 2011 study found that even children who do not live with any smokers display a “45 percent increase in cotinine levels (a tobacco exposure biomarker) if they live in apartments compared with detached homes.”⁵ In fact, between 26-64 % of residents living in multiunit housing report secondhand smoke “incursions into their units from external sources (e.g., hallways or adjacent apartments).”⁶

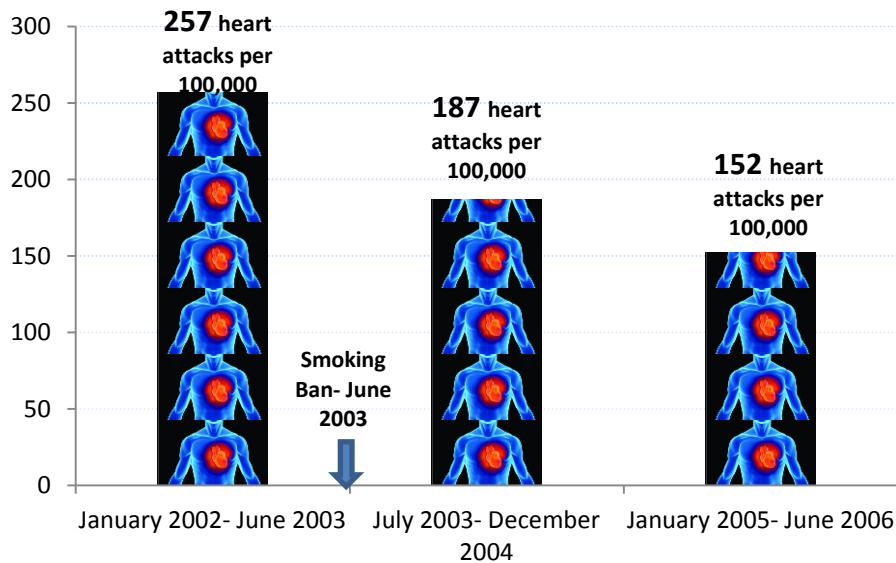


Secondhand smoke can infiltrate into other units through hallways and stairwells.

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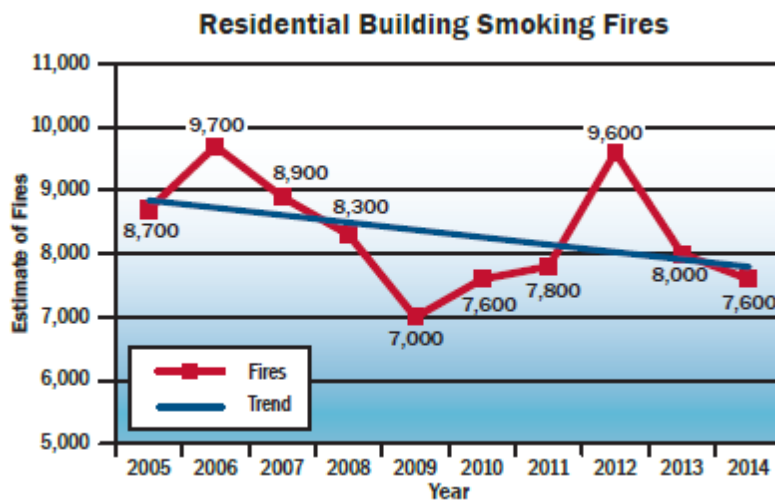
Public smoking bans in the U.S. and abroad have been an effective way to improve health. There was a 41% drop in the number of individuals hospitalized for heart attacks three years after a ban on smoking in workplaces and public areas in Pueblo, Colorado.⁴ Researchers have also found a 10% reduction in premature births and severe childhood asthma attacks within a year of smoke-free laws being introduced.⁷

Impact of a Public Smoking Ban on Heart Attacks in Pueblo, Colorado



Source: A Report of the Surgeon General: How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: What It Means to You, 2010

Smoking within the home can also lead to fire-related deaths and injury. While there has been an overall decline over the past decade, in 2014 there were still 7,600 residential fires due to smoking, resulting in 325 deaths, 775 injuries, and \$229 million in damages.⁸ Smoking was the second leading cause of residential building fire deaths.⁸



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Data Center, 2014

Economic Impact of Rule

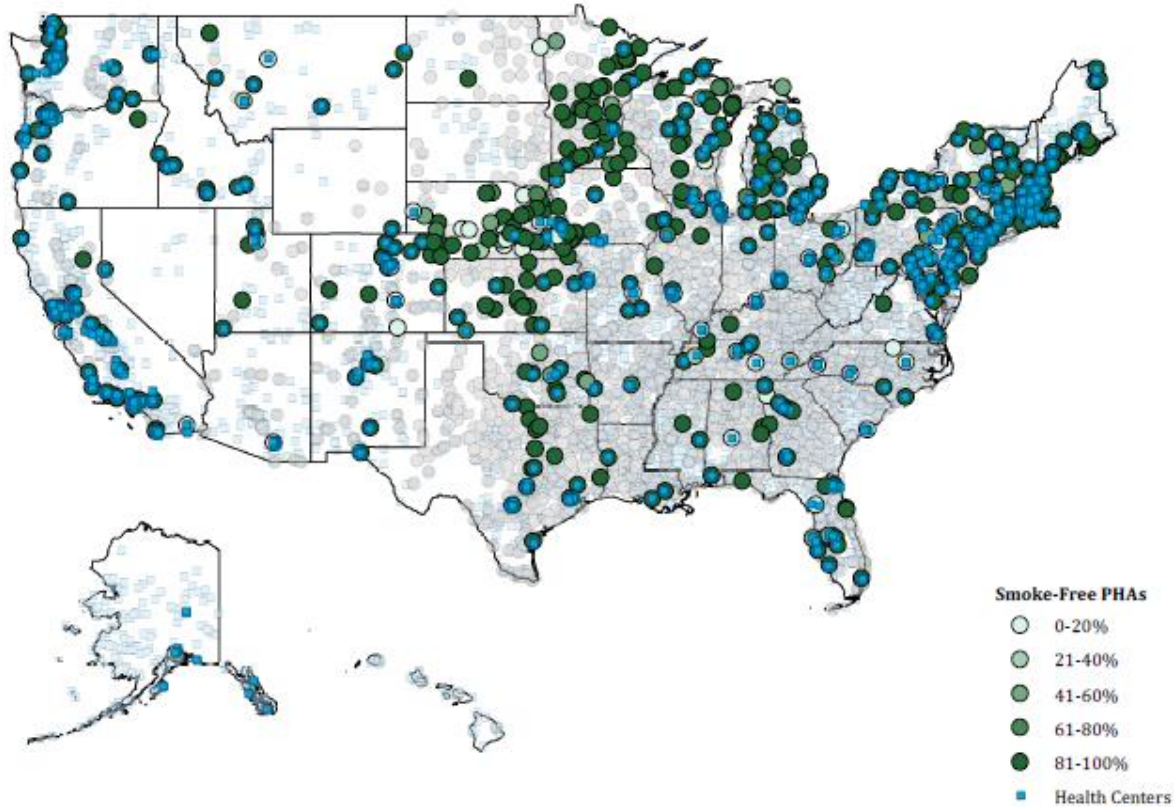
The benefits of smoke-free housing extend beyond health. According to a 2014 study by King et al., prohibiting smoking in all subsidized or public housing nationwide “would yield annual cost savings of \$496.82 million, including \$310.48 million in secondhand smoke-related health care, \$133.77 million in renovation expenses, and \$52.57 million in smoking-attributable fire losses.”⁹

Many PHAs have already adopted smoke free policies

More than 600 PHAs and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) have voluntarily adopted smoke-free policies, resulting in 228,000 public housing units that are currently smoke free. The map below displays the PHAs located within 5 miles of a Health Center Program that has smoke-free units. The percentage of units that are smoke free are indicated by color; the darker green circles indicate greater percentage of smoke-free units.

Once the Rule has been implemented, another 940,000 public housing units, including more than 500,000 units inhabited by elderly residents and 760,000 units with children, will become smoke free.

Smoke-free PHAs and Health Centers within 5 Miles of Public Housing



Source: National Center for Health in Public Housing, www.nchph.org

Current Health Status of Patients Living in or Immediately Accessible to Public Housing

Health Center Programs that receive special populations funding from the Health Services and Resources Administration (HRSA) to serve public housing residents are called Public Housing Primary Care (PHPC) programs. PHPCs provides comprehensive primary health care services, including internal medicine, pediatrics, OB/GYN care, preventive and restorative dental care, health education, outreach, laboratory services, and case management. These medical and behavioral health services are provided directly on the premises of public housing developments or at other locations immediately accessible to residents. In 2015, a total of 105 PHPCs provided care to 487,034 patients.¹⁰ Approximately 41.3% of PHPC patients were White, 37.8% Hispanic, 36% African American, and 3.5% Asian.¹⁰ Approximately 30.9% were children and 6.8% were elderly.¹⁰

Most patients living in or immediately accessible to public housing live in poverty. In 2015, 81.6% had incomes at or below the federal poverty level and 58.6% received Medicaid, 7.7% Medicare, 4.1% were dual eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare, and 21.9% were uninsured.¹⁰

These patients are also more likely to be in poor health and are more likely to be affected by secondhand smoke. They exhibit high rates of tobacco-related illnesses; health problems that could be exacerbated by secondhand smoke, such as heart disease, diabetes, and asthma; or are already utilizing smoking cessation services. As a result, a smoking ban in public housing is a targeted measure to improve the health of public housing residents.

Medical Condition	Number of Patient Visits	Number of Patients
Asthma	59,353	29,111
Heart Disease	31,858	12,330
Diabetes	166,151	44,321
Tobacco Use Disorders	62,852	28,177
Smoke and tobacco use cessation counseling	40,643	20,731

Guidance on Implementing the Rule

PHAs will have 18 months to implement the final Rule from HUD. HUD encourages PHAs to obtain board approval when creating their individual smoke-free policies. Adopting a smoke-free policy is likely to result in an amendment or modification to the PHA Plan and HUD suggests that PHAs conduct public meetings, according to standard PHA amendment procedures, and consult with resident advisory boards to assist with and make recommendations for the PHA plan.

How Can PHPCs Work with PHAs to Address the HUD Rule?

PHPCs are in a unique position to collaborate with PHAs to implement the smoking ban and address the health care needs of public housing residents. In a 2015 Needs Assessment survey completed by NCHPH, 57.7% of PHPCs reported that they have already established a collaborative agreement with their PHA, while 32.7% reported that have not.¹¹

The activities that PHPCs and PHAs most often collaborate on are related to health promotion and education, outreach, community events, and patient care coordination.¹¹ PHPCs believe that collaborating with PHAs improves access to care and the quality of care that patients receive.¹¹ PHPCs report that because of the collaboration, they have a better understanding of health issues affecting public housing residents, there is more appropriate use of health services at the PHPC, and there is an increase in community support because of the relationship with the PHA.¹¹



PHPCs are also the primary source of health care for public housing residents. When a smoking ban goes into effect, it is likely that many residents will attempt to quit tobacco products, resulting in a higher need for smoking cessation and counseling services.

Resources for PHAs and PHPCs

For more information, go to HUD's Smoke-Free Public Housing and Multifamily Properties Resource Portal, https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/healthy_homes/smokefree

HUD, Change is in the Air: An Action Guide for Establishing Smoke-Free Public Housing and Multifamily Properties, 2014

<https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=SMOKEFREEACTIONGUIDE.PDF>

Citations

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