

## Strategies for Enforcement Problem Solving

Considerations around enforcement should be woven into all phases of policy development, communication, implementation and monitoring. Here are some strategies for enforcement problem solving that other school administrators have found helpful.

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## Strategies for Policy Development and Implementation

- **School infrastructure:** Identify a faculty member to take a lead role in tobacco use prevention education, policy and cessation efforts for each school. Put tobacco use prevention in their job descriptions and provide the training and support necessary for them to do their job well.
- **Enforcement:** Allow students to take an alternative to suspension (ATS) program no more than two times to avoid out of school suspension.
- **ATS and cessation program facilitation:** Recruit more than one facilitator per site for the ATS and youth cessation program. If possible, recruit at least one former tobacco user. Where possible, recruit school support services staff to assist in implementing the program.
- **Staff support for students attempting to quit:** Encourage teachers to allow students in ATS and youth cessation programs to use techniques in class (water, candy) to help them in their quitting process.
- **Cessation program implementation:** Screen potential cessation participants to determine tobacco use and motivation to quit. Offer cessation programs multiple times during the school year to the entire student body, as well as ATS students. Generate potential participants through school wide promotion activities that focus on quitting tobacco use. Involve respected faculty who are former tobacco users in the cessation programs.
- **Team training of staff for program implementation:** Send a team of school staff to the "Teaming Up for Tobacco-Free Schools" policy workshop offered by the Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch. It should consist of staff who will be involved in different stages of implementation, such as communication, handling discipline, etc.
- **Timing of policy:** Select an implementation date with significance, such as the start of the new school year. Allow sufficient time for people to prepare for

implementation. Students and staff who are tobacco users may need several months to quit or cut down on tobacco use. Identify cessation resources available to tobacco users – in the school district and the community. Let tobacco users know about these options well in advance of the day the policy goes into effect.

- **Community partnerships:** Include the wider community in discussions about the implementation of a tobacco-free policy. Provide a forum in which businesses and community residents can express concerns to school administrators and board members. All parties can develop a joint and mutually agreeable plan to address problems. Diverse attendance can help develop and enforce diverse strategies tailored to meet the needs of students, staff and visitors in the school district. Explore partnerships with local hospitals, nonprofits, and mental health or public health departments to offer programs such as ATS, cessation and promotion activities. School districts should coordinate with local Tobacco Prevention and Control coalitions (where they exist) to organize and sponsor tobacco prevention initiatives.
- **Student involvement:** Involve all students in the development and enforcement of policies and in promoting a tobacco-free lifestyle on campus. Include them on the team that establishes standards for enforcement. Involve students in the planning and implementation of promotion activities, either through student clubs or as peer educators. The Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU) program offers training for high school students who can serve as role models to middle school students. Create an environment that emphasizes that it is everyone’s responsibility to promote a tobacco-free school environment.

## **Strategies for Enforcement**

- **Everyone’s responsibility:** Consider including everyone on enforcement responsibilities: students, staff, principals, teachers and others.
- **Enforcement officers:** Use the same monitors (i.e.: hall monitors) used for aggressive behavior and truancy for monitoring tobacco use on school grounds. Monitors should be trained on the enforcement protocol. If police officers or school resource officers (SRO’s) currently monitor the school grounds for compliance with laws and other school regulations, they should be responsible for tobacco monitoring as well. Visibility of these law enforcement personnel may reduce visitor policy violations.
- **Consistency:** Make a firm commitment to enforce the policy consistently. Expect some people to “test” enforcement of the new policy. Remember that consistent enforcement sends a clear message about the importance of the policy to the people who are enforcing it.

## Strategies for Communication

- **Proactive, clear and consistent communication:** This is most important for enforcement. Post the actual written policy around campus for visitors and students to read. Have sufficient signage in place concurrent with implementation of the policy. Signage should be visible at entrance to campus, school building entrances, playing fields, bleachers, vehicles, and other areas where tobacco use violations may occur. Announce policies at athletic events, plays, dances and concerts. Mention tobacco-free policies on written event program guides. Publicize the tobacco policy in student newsletters. Announce the policy at all PTA and PTO meetings. Place contracts in student handbooks that detail the tobacco policy. Have both students and parents sign and return the contract stating they have read and understand the policy. Mention tobacco-free policies at new student orientations for middle, high, alternative and transfer students. Direct attention to tobacco-free policies in the employee hiring or contracting process.
- **Positive message:** Present the policy in a positive light – while, at the same time, acknowledging that students, staff and visitors may find it initially challenging. Emphasize the health, academic and social benefits of a tobacco-free school to staff and students. Send the clear message that the benefits far outweigh any challenges that are faced. Encourage students to make responsible decisions about the health of their bodies, and to have respect for other students and staff by not using tobacco on campus.
- **Focus on behavior:** Focus on the use of tobacco as an unhealthy behavior – not on the user. For example, teachers who use tobacco may still be great role models for youth but their tobacco use promotes an unhealthy behavior. Make sure students and staff are not alienated or embarrassed about their tobacco use.
- **Expectations and consequences:** Make sure the policy clearly articulates the expected behaviors and consequences of failing to meet the expectations as specified in the policy. Outline expectations for students, staff and visitors. Design a contract all employees are required to sign at the beginning of the school year to acknowledge that they understand the policy and the consequences of violations. Create a similar one for students and their parents.

*(Adapted from the Oregon Department of Health Services Tobacco Prevention and Education Program)*