# Comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policy Toolkit

**Tools and Resources for California Schools**

**California Department of Education**

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Table of Contents

Comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policy Toolkit 1

INTRODUCTION 1

EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPREHENSIVE TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOL POLICIES 2

VALUE AND BENEFITS OF TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOLS 3

ADOPTING A POLICY 5

Policy Development and Implementation 5

1. Business and Noninstructional Operations 6

2. Students 6

COMMUNICATING THE POLICY 7

To Students 7

To Employees 8

To Parents/Guardians 8

To the Public/Community 9

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING THE POLICY 9

ENFORCING THE POLICY 11

Enforcement Responsibility 11

Communication 12

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOLS 13

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS 17

SAMPLE CONSEQUENCES FOR POLICY VIOLATIONS 19

For Students 19

Parent/guardian notification 19

Support 19

Cessation 19

Suspension 20

For Staff 20

Education and support 20

Disciplinary action 20

For Parents, Family Members, and the Public 20

Communication 20

Progressive enforcement 21

CHECKLIST FOR MODEL TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOL POLICY 22

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES 23

Policy and Communication 23

Cessation Services 24

Assessment and Technical Assistance 25

## INTRODUCTION

The ability to breathe clean, smoke-free air is an important element of a healthy school and community. Adopting and enforcing a 100 percent Tobacco-Free School Policy will help to create a healthy school campus environment for all students, staff, and visitors to California’s public schools and ensure that another generation of youth grows up tobacco-free.

Nearly all tobacco use begins in youth and young adulthood, so it is critical that we prevent it during the school years. In 2018, the cigarette smoking prevalence rate for California high school students was 2.0 percent, a marked decrease over the last decade. However, the recent emergence of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) has dramatically reversed this public health achievement. Nationally, the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey indicated that from 2011 to 2018, high school students’ electronic cigarettes current use increased from 1.5% to 20.8%. At the state level, the 2018 California Student Tobacco Survey found that current use prevalence among high school students increased from 8.6% in 2015-16 to 10.9% in 2017-18. Evidence shows that youth who use e-cigarettes are more likely to also use traditional cigarettes.

Tobacco-free school policies that are consistently enforced promote and reflect norms that tobacco use is not an acceptable behavior. More importantly, they are associated with decreased tobacco-use prevalence among adolescents.

To help ensure that all kids in California have the best chance of growing up tobacco and nicotine free, the California Department of Education (CDE) developed this Tobacco-Free Schools Toolkit to promote tobacco-free schools. This tool kit provides many helpful resources that can be used to establish and promote a Tobacco-Free School Policy.

We hope that these tools will assist you to assess your school district’s current tobacco-free policy, act to address any gaps and, if necessary, strengthen your enforcement procedures.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPREHENSIVE TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOL POLICIES

A comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policy does more than deter individual tobacco use. It benefits everyone by reducing exposure to secondhand smoke and creating frameworks and systems that reinforce tobacco-free norms and attitudes. These in turn affect the current and future use of tobacco products, thereby having a positive impact on the health of the entire community.

It is well established that tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States and that nearly 9 out of 10 cigarette smokers first try cigarette smoking by age 18. Each day in the U.S. about 2,000 youth under 18 years of age begin smoking. There are multiple reasons why young people start smoking or using other tobacco products. Influences come from parents, teachers, coaches, peers, mass media, and the price/availability of tobacco products. Because there are so many influences, efforts to reduce tobacco use must include more than one strategy.

Research documented in the 2000 Surgeon General’s Report, “Reducing Tobacco Use,” states that comprehensive school-based programs, combined with community and mass-media efforts, can effectively prevent or postpone smoking onset in 20 to 40 percent of U.S. adolescents.

A description of comprehensive school-based programs is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in its “Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction.” The first guideline recommends that schools develop and enforce policies to prohibit tobacco use by students, staff, parents, and visitors on school grounds; in school vehicles; and at all school-sponsored events, on or off school property. The other guidelines include cessation support for both students and staff and involvement of parents or families in supporting programs to prevent tobacco use.

In Oregon, between 1999 and 2000, smoking rates among eighth graders dropped by 22 percent overall in schools that implemented the CDC guidelines. There was a dose-response relationship in smoking rates in schools with the highest degree of implementation compared to schools with lower degrees of implementation. (*Effectiveness of School-Based Programs as a Component of a Statewide Tobacco Control Initiative*—*Oregon, 1999–2000, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MMWR 2001: 50: 663-6.*)

As the research shows, observing others using tobacco has a significant influence on children. The importance of de-normalizing tobacco use through positive role modeling cannot be overlooked. It is as necessary as the classroom education. A no-tolerance policy enables administrators to take a stronger stand; allows staff, volunteers, parents, and students to participate in enforcement; and sends a stronger prevention message to young people.

In order to protect all California students, school staff, and visitors to schools, a comprehensive approach is necessary. A clearly articulated Tobacco-Free School Policy applied fairly and consistently, can help students decide not to start using tobacco or to quit using tobacco products.

## VALUE AND BENEFITS OF TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOLS

One hundred percent tobacco-free schools protect children from the harmful effects of tobacco at school. The benefits of a smoke-free environment and positive role models for students are important, but there are many other reasons that a 100 percent Tobacco-Free School Policy benefits the entire school community.

1. **One hundred percent tobacco-free schools provide positive role modeling by adult employees and visitors.**A 100 percent Tobacco-Free School Policy represents a firm commitment by school administration, teachers, and parents to prohibit tobacco use by students, employees, and visitors. Compliance with the 100 percent Tobacco-Free School Policy confirms this commitment and provides genuine opportunities for adults and peers to serve as role models for not using tobacco. A 2003 study found that students were more likely to smoke in a location where they saw other students and adults smoking. In addition, youth look to adults they respect, such as teachers and school staff, as role models. For these reasons, it is important that all school staff serve as positive role models for students and do not use any tobacco products in their presence.
2. **Lessons learned in the classroom are reinforced with the 100 percent Tobacco-Free School Policy.**

Educators consider tobacco-use prevention education to be an essential element of comprehensive school health programs. Curriculums often teach resistance skills to help children learn to say no to offers of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Coaches of athletic teams regularly prohibit tobacco use by team members. School hallways and bulletin boards often display prevention messages. Children get a mixed message if they step outside their classrooms to view clusters of students and/or teachers using tobacco on school grounds. Schools that are not tobacco free send conflicting messages to students about tobacco use.

1. **One hundred percent tobacco-free school districts provide a safe environment for students by reducing exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke.**

Children are especially sensitive to the effects of secondhand smoke, whether the smoke is indoors or outdoors, and even limited exposure can be harmful. Passing by an outdoor smoking area can trigger an asthma attack or worsen breathing problems for students with certain health conditions. As little as 30 minutes of exposure to secondhand smoke can affect coronary arteries of healthy, young nonsmokers. It causes acute and chronic respiratory disease, ear and upper respiratory infections—all primary causes of school absences. These dangers do not meet the standard of a safe environment at school.

1. **One hundred percent tobacco-free school policies protect children from developing an addiction to a dangerous drug.**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has classified nicotine, found in tobacco products, as a drug. School policies do not allow the use of other drugs, such as alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine on school grounds and at school-sponsored events. Why should an exception be made for nicotine and tobacco?

1. **One hundred percent tobacco-free school policies comply with federal legislation prohibiting smoking inside school buildings.**

The Pro Children Act of 1994 states: "No person shall permit smoking within any indoor facility utilized for services to kindergarten, elementary, or secondary education or library services to children." Children's services for routine health care or day care or early childhood development are also included. This applies to all schools and programs that are funded by the federal government or through state and local governments.

1. **The 100 percent tobacco-free school model policy helps ensure compliance with state laws designed to limit access to tobacco by children.**

Existing state law prohibits the sale and distribution of tobacco products to people under 21 years old. Schools can uphold the intent of the law to limit youth access to tobacco products by crafting policies that prohibit tobacco use by students, employees, and visitors at all times, in all school buildings, on all school grounds, and at all school-sponsored events. Additionally, schools can consistently enforce tobacco-use policies and can confiscate tobacco products and paraphernalia brought to school.

1. **One hundred percent tobacco-free school policies prepare students for the reality of tobacco-free workplaces and communities.**

One hundred percent tobacco-free school policies prepare students for an ever-increasingly tobacco-free world, where tobacco is prohibited in worksites, restaurants, airplanes, malls, and more. Employers are becoming more reluctant to hire smokers, due to increased absenteeism, health care costs, and possible disability. In a competitive job market and nonsmoking community environment, it is important that all students leave their school years without a smoking-related handicap.

1. **One hundred percent tobacco-free school policies protect schools from the risk of future liability by prohibiting smoking on school premises.**

Litigation related to tobacco addiction and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is growing. Individuals have recovered damages in lawsuits because their employers failed to provide a safe, smoke-free work environment. With the rise in the number of children with asthma, there may be more cause for concern, particularly if an asthma attack or other respiratory problems are triggered because a child is exposed to tobacco smoke in a school setting.

1. **Tobacco-free school reduces the risk of fires due to "smoking materials."**

"Smoking material" fires are the leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. "Smoking materials" are lighted tobacco products, not lighters or matches. According to the National Fire Protection Association, almost 600 deaths per year were caused by smoking material fires during 2012-2016. Lighted cigarettes can be easily tossed into school trash cans, especially in bathrooms, placing schools and school children at increased risk of injury due to "smoking material" fires.

## ADOPTING A POLICY

### Policy Development and Implementation

**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. 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. Explore partnerships with local hospitals, nonprofits, and mental health or public health departments to offer programs such as alternative-to-suspension, cessation and activities promoting a tobacco-free environment. School districts should coordinate with local tobacco prevention and control coalitions to organize and sponsor tobacco prevention initiatives.

**Student Involvement**

Involve 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. The planning and implementation of promotional activities, either through student clubs or as peer educators, is another way to involve students. Create an environment that emphasizes it is everyone’s responsibility to promote a tobacco-free school environment.

**Alternative-to-Suspension and Cessation Program Facilitation**

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 to alternative-to-suspension students. Generate potential participants through schoolwide promotion activities that focus on quitting tobacco use.

**Sample Policies and Regulations**

These samples are made available by permission from the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to assist school districts and the County Offices of Education (COE) in developing board adopted tobacco-free policies and regulations to enforce the policies. More information can be found by calling 916-371-4691.

### Business and Noninstructional Operations

[Tobacco-Free Schools - Business and Noninstructional Operations Sample Board Policy and Sample Administrative Regulations](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/tfsamplepolicyregs.asp)

Assists schools in developing tobacco-free policies and enforcement regulations for business and non-instructional operations that meet the requirements of the California Health and Safety Code.

### Students

[Tobacco-Free Schools - Student Sample Board Policy and Administrative Regulations](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/tobpolicyregs.asp)

Assists schools in developing tobacco-use prevention education policies and enforcement regulations that meet the requirements of the California Health and Safety Code.

## COMMUNICATING THE POLICY

Tobacco-free policy implementation can be challenging. Without effective communication, the policy will be unenforceable. The following lists include some communication ideas and strategies to ensure that all members of the school and community—students, staff, and visitors are aware of the policy, understand the rationale behind it, and are clear about the consequences if the policy is violated. No matter what stage your district is in, just getting started, implementation, or dealing with enforcement issues, experience shows that communication must be clear, ongoing, and consistent. Be sure to work with members of your school and community to identify the best strategies for your school district.

### To Students

* Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots and athletic facilities; and in school and activity buses.
* Print details in student handbooks and orientation guides.
* Review and discuss the policy at student orientation meetings, including meetings with new and transfer students.
* Spread the information through student organizations, activities, and newspapers.
* Make announcements over morning broadcasts at school and over loudspeaker systems at school events. Print reminders of the policy in school event programs.
* Tell students about opportunities for tobacco-cessation support programs in the community and provide information about how students can access these programs.
* Ask student groups or clubs to assist in communicating the policy—such as Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU), Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), etc.
* Encourage, support, and empower students to appropriately inform other students and visitors about the prohibition of tobacco use if they witness violations of the policy.
* Include information in student newspaper articles and on school websites, including those that target students.

### To Employees

* Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, athletic facilities, and in vehicles.
* Provide every school district employee with a copy of the policy and a letter of explanation from the school board.
* Discuss the policy at staff meetings and new staff orientation.
* Conduct an in-service presentation on tobacco-related school policies for all staff, including teaching staff, bus drivers, aides, food service workers, and maintenance staff.
* Post information, along with a copy of the policy, in staff lounges or offices.
* Include information in staff newsletters.
* Inform staff about opportunities for tobacco cessation support programs in the community.
* Inform potential employees of the policy in all job interviews. Include a statement that the school district is tobacco free on all job application forms.

### To Parents/Guardians

* Provide information at parent open houses at the start of the new school year.
* Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, and athletic facilities.

* Send a letter to each parent or guardian that (1) explains the policy change; (2) provides the health, academic, and social reasons for the change; (3) outlines the consequences for violators; and (4) asks for support in enforcement.

* Ask parents to sign student-school contracts that address the tobacco-free policy for participation in extra- and co-curricular activities.
* Include an article outlining the policy and implications of the policy in parent-oriented newsletters and school or community newspapers.
* Announce the policy at all athletic events, meetings, concerts, and plays. Have students develop and/or deliver announcements. Include written reminders in event programs.

### To the Public/Community

* Place an ad in the paper thanking the school board for its decision to make the school district 100 percent tobacco free.

* Ask other community agencies such as local public health units, tobacco-free coalitions, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs coalitions, parent teacher associations, parent teacher organizations, and asthma coalitions to include an article about the new Tobacco-Free School Policy in their newsletters. (Provide them with a short article, if necessary.)
* Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, and athletic facilities. Other places to post signs include gathering places, restrooms, loading areas, and stairwells.
* Remove all ashtrays from school property.
* Announce the policy at all athletic events, meetings, concerts, and plays. Include written reminders in event programs.

* Ask students, staff, and community volunteers to assist in distributing informational flyers regarding the policy at school events.
* Communicate the policy to parents and business volunteers who assist in supervising youth during off-campus activities, including field trips, job shadowing, or community service.

## TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING THE POLICY

Even with signs, written materials and event announcements, some school visitors may not realize that the school district has a comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policy in place. This is why all school staff should be trained to communicate the policy—one-on-one—to the public. Gentle, positive, and clear messages will let violators know that the policy is in place, and that it **will** be enforced. Knowing how to communicate the policy effectively will go a long way toward relieving stress school staff may have regarding enforcement and will help to avoid negative confrontations with parents, workers, and other school visitors.

* **Use announcements**

Regular announcements at school events are a simple and effective strategy to get the message across, especially when used in combination with signage and information in event brochures.

* **Positive, pro-health announcements**

Announcements should be positive—reminding visitors that the policy exists to protect the health of students, staff, and visitors. Provide at least three announcements—at the beginning of the event; at half time/intermission; and end of the event—to ensure everyone is aware of the policy.

* **Youth participation**

Invite youth groups such as TATU, SADD, or Students Working Against Tobacco teams to create and make the announcements.

* **Sample announcement**

Here is a sample announcement for you to use at your school-sponsored events:

**“To protect the health of our students, staff, and visitors, we would like to remind you that our school is 100 percent tobacco free. Please refrain from using tobacco products anywhere on campus. Thank you for your cooperation.”**

* **Understand the need for gentle reminders**

Even after announcements are made, it is possible that a person in violation of the policy is unaware that the policy is in place. This is particularly true if your school district recently adopted the policy. Politely and firmly, let the violator know that the campus, as well as the entire school district, is now 100 percent tobacco free.

* **Have a rationale for the policy**

Inform violators of the reasons for the policy in a positive manner. Let them know the school board enacted the policy to protect students, school staff, and visitors from secondhand smoke, to ensure a safe learning and work environment for students and staff, and to model healthy and positive behaviors for students.

* **Use a range of communication strategies**

Make sure that several communication strategies are in place. Visitors at events should see signs and information in event programs that communicate the policy and should hear oral announcements that are made throughout the event.

## ENFORCING THE POLICY

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

### Enforcement Responsibility

* **Everyone’s responsibility**

Consider including everyone on enforcement responsibilities: students, staff, principals, teachers, and others. Encourage members of student organizations, Parent Teacher Association/Parent Teacher Organization members, and other groups with members attending events to remind spectators of the policy. When using volunteers—especially students—provide some guidance on tactful, non-confrontational approaches.

* **Enforcement officers**

Use the same monitors used for aggressive behavior and truancy to monitor tobacco use on school grounds. Monitors should be trained on the enforcement protocol. If police or school resource officers 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.

### Communication

* **Proactive, clear, and consistent communication**

This is a very important part of enforcement. Post the written policy and signage around campus for visitors and students to read. Announce the policy at athletic events, plays, dances, and concerts. Put information about the policy in programs and student and staff newsletters. Place contracts in student handbooks that detail the tobacco-free 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 school, high school, alternative school, and for transfer students. Point out the tobacco-free policies during 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 challenging initially. Emphasize the health, academic, and social benefits of a tobacco-free school to students, staff, and visitors. Encourage students to make responsible decisions about their health 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 adults are not alienated because of their tobacco use.

**Appendix A**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOLS

**What is a tobacco-free school district?**A school district that has adopted a Tobacco-Free School Policy prohibits tobacco use by anyone, anywhere on school district property and in district vehicles at any time. The policy applies to students, staff, visitors, and all others. This policy also extends to any school-sponsored event held off campus.

**Why are tobacco-free schools important?**

The health of California’s youth is critical to our state’s future. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 40,000 Californians die from a tobacco-related illness each year. Despite this tragic figure, approximately three percent of California youth in the ninth grade and approximately four percent in the eleventh grade reported smoking (California Healthy Kids Survey, 2015-2017). Many will become addicted and die prematurely. Evidence shows that comprehensive school-based programs that include tobacco-free policies, combined with community and mass-media efforts, can effectively prevent or postpone the onset of smoking by 20 to 40 percent among U.S. teens. (Surgeon General’s Report “Reducing Tobacco Use,” 2001). A tobacco-free school district policy makes schools healthier. With an alarming rise in asthma rates in recent years, **schools** must take steps to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke that can trigger asthma attacks.

**Smoking is already prohibited in our school buildings, so what will be gained by going tobacco free?**

Exposure to secondhand smoke—even a small amount—is dangerous. As little as 30 minutes of exposure to secondhand smoke can affect the coronary arteries of healthy, young nonsmokers. It causes acute and chronic respiratory disease and causes or exacerbates asthma, ear infections and upper respiratory infections—primary causes of school absence. Tobacco-free school district policies eliminate the threat of secondhand smoke.

A tobacco-free schools district policy prepares students for the realities of an increasingly tobacco-free world—one where tobacco use is prohibited at most public places such as worksites, in restaurants, on airplanes, in malls, etc.

A tobacco-free school district policy will help establish a tobacco-free norm for our school grounds, which is healthier for everyone—students, school employees, and visitors.

**Will we risk losing staff that might be tobacco users?**

According to personnel at school districts that have adopted a comprehensive tobacco-free policy, teacher attrition is not an issue. Most administrators report that teacher recruitment and retention issues are related to local supplements, geographical location, and family situations—not to the implementation of a Tobacco-Free School Policy. Furthermore, anecdotal information from administrators in tobacco-free school districts suggests that many job applicants want a tobacco-free work environment and view this policy as an asset.

**What are the benefits of offering cessation programs for staff?**

Experience shows that employees from school districts that adopt a comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policy often use this as an opportunity to cut down their tobacco use or quit. This can lead to decreased absences due to tobacco-related illnesses, decreased tobacco-related health-care costs and increased productivity. School districts are strongly encouraged to talk with these employees about the kinds of support they may need to be successful in quitting and to consider offering these services and resources. Resources and support to assist employees in quitting should be provided early in the policy development process so that the staff is prepared when the campus becomes tobacco free. For information about local cessation programs, check with your health provider or contact the California Smokers’ Helpline at nobutts.org.

**Will we risk losing our adult supporters at athletic events?**

It is highly unlikely that you will lose adult supporters at athletic events. Administrators in school districts that have adopted a comprehensive tobacco-free policy have noted that the vast majority of adults have willingly complied with the Tobacco-Free School Policy during athletic events. This makes sense, as these adults are school supporters and often have children attending the school. They understand and appreciate that school policies, such as ones prohibiting tobacco use and alcohol/drug use on campus, are designed to protect the safety of youth and offer a positive environment for students and families. Furthermore, the expectation that an event or a facility is tobacco free has become more common in many social situations as we have become more aware of the health risks of secondhand smoke.

As malls, movie theaters, restaurants, and air travel became smoke-free, we did not see a drop off in patronage. The school policy does not require people to quit using tobacco; it simply asks them to refrain from tobacco use on school property and at school-sponsored events.

**How do we handle the maintenance staff, construction crews, and contractors that come on campus and use tobacco?**

You would handle it much like you would handle compliance with other policies related to use of certain substances on campus (e.g., alcohol) or certain behavior expectations (e.g., nonviolence, no firearms). The key is communicating the policy to firms and companies that contract with the schools.

**Some employers, including hospitals and government offices, have designated areas for adult tobacco users. Why should school policies be stricter?**

Allowing any tobacco use on school campuses is inconsistent with the tobacco-use prevention messages being taught inside the classroom. Schools that are tobacco free provide the best learning and social environment for students, and a healthier working environment for staff.

Hospitals across California have adopted 100 percent tobacco-free policies in recent years and government offices already prohibit smoking within buildings and within 20 feet of entrances to buildings.

**What about the argument that it is legal for adults to use tobacco?**

Schools have the authority to develop, adopt, and implement policies that are in the best interest of the students and staff. A Tobacco-Free School Policy restricts tobacco use on the school campus and at school-sponsored events only. Tobacco is a legal product for adults to purchase and use. Adult tobacco users have the option of going off campus to use tobacco.

**Once a school district adopts a tobacco-free school policy, how is it implemented and enforced?**

Frequent communication—including prominently placed signage, letters to parents, announcements made during school events, and athletic activities—is the key to successful tobacco-free school policy compliance. School districts are encouraged to develop local implementation plans.

**What funding is available to assist schools in implementing and enforcing the tobacco-free policy?**

School districts may apply for grant funding from the CDE’s Tobacco-Use Prevention Education Office. Funding is available to assist school district’s in implementing and enforcing their Tobacco-Free School Policy.

**Who should I contact if I have more questions on tobacco-free schools in California?**

Francisco J. Michel, MA

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California Department of Education

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**Appendix B**

## SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents:

On **date**, the **name of school district** School Board adopted a comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policy. This policy prohibits all tobacco use by everyone, everywhere on campus, at all times—including school events after regular school hours. This policy also prohibits students from bringing tobacco products on campus. A copy of the new policy is attached.

The School Board adopted this policy for three reasons:

1. To support families in keeping their children tobacco free

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in our state and nation. Eighty percent of adults who are addicted to tobacco began using it before the age of 18, with the average age of initiation between 12 and 14 years old. Most parents, even those who use tobacco, do not want their children to become addicted. Youth spend a great deal of time at school and school-related events. Allowing the use of tobacco products on campus implies school approval of such use. Keeping tobacco off campus means students have fewer opportunities to see others using tobacco and have less access to tobacco products. This means they will be less likely to try, and possibly become addicted to, tobacco.

1. To provide a safe environment for students and staff

We have an obligation to provide a safe learning and work environment for students and staff. Exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger asthma attacks or make respiratory problems worse. When adults smoke outside, near building entrances during school-sponsored events, they place others at risk.

1. To provide a cleaner campus

Discarded smoking and spit-tobacco materials litter school grounds, parking lots, and vehicles. Cleaning discarded tobacco products is costly. Prohibiting tobacco from campus will mean a cleaner environment for students, staff, and visitors.

Over the next few months, we will be placing signs promoting the new policy on all school campuses, and making announcements at all school-sponsored events. We also will be letting you know of upcoming tobacco education and cessation classes for

students who use tobacco and want to stop. If you have questions or comments about the policy, or if you want more information about these programs or services, please call the principal at your child’s school.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

**Name of Superintendent or Board Chair**

## SAMPLE CONSEQUENCES FOR POLICY VIOLATIONS

Across the state, school tobacco-policy enforcement varies with respect to consequences or penalties for tobacco violations and provisions for positive options for punishment. Talk with administrators, staff, students, and parents to identify the best strategies for enforcing the policy within the school district. What follows are some suggestions based on the experiences of school districts across the country. Experience shows that the most effective enforcement policies are based on the following key principles.

### For Students

### Parent/guardian notification

The policy should address parent/guardian notification procedures. The parent/guardian should be notified of all violations and actions taken by the school.

### Support

Refer students to the guidance counselor, school nurse, or other health or counseling services for all offenses for screening, information, counseling, and referral. Tobacco use is an addictive disease, not merely a discipline problem. It usually indicates psychosocial issues affecting the adolescent, and the student may engage in other unhealthy behaviors such as drug or alcohol use. Students who use tobacco also may have developed or exacerbated health problems as a result of their use. A screening will help to identify these at an early stage. The tobacco-free policy will be more effective if there are clear procedures for identification, intervention, and referral of students with tobacco-related problems.

### Cessation

Research tells us that half of all young people who use tobacco want to quit. Offering cessation classes or helping to link students who violate the policy to community-based cessation programs will motivate students to quit and introduce skills and techniques they can use to accomplish this. It will also help students develop coping methods to prevent relapse. Scheduling of teen cessation programs vary. They can be offered before or after school, during lunch, or on Saturdays. Some school districts offer teen cessation programs multiple times per year to the entire school body, as well as to alternative to suspension students.

### Suspension

Suspension rarely helps a student’s tobacco addiction. Ideally, suspension would be used only after a student has had several prior violations or refused to participate in other outlined measures. To provide uniformity and fairness in the decision-making process, school districts should clearly outline conditions that will lead to suspension. Students and parents should be shown the steps of enforcement so they understand the seriousness of this action. Suspension should always be accompanied by counseling. A re-entry conference should be held prior to the student’s return to school with the student, parent/guardian, and administrator. If suspension is deemed absolutely necessary, such as in the case of a repeat offender who refuses to participate in other options offered, alternative forms of suspension, such as in-school suspension, are preferable to out-of-school suspension.

### For Staff

### Education and support

Encourage staff to talk with their health professional regarding their tobacco use. As noted previously, tobacco use is an addictive disease, and staff that use tobacco may have developed health problems as a result. It is strongly recommended that all staff who violate the tobacco-free policy be provided with information about the dangers of tobacco use and about cessation options available to them in the community and from [Kick It California](https://kickitca.org/).

### Disciplinary action

After the second offense, staff violations should be considered as insubordination and subject to disciplinary action as they would be for any other school policy violation. Staff must be expected to adhere to the policy stipulations as outlined.

### For Parents, Family Members, and the Public

### Communication

Communication with the public should focus on positive messages to enforce the policy. Enlist the support of the public in enforcing the policy through ongoing communication of the policy and involvement in positive tobacco-use prevention activities.

### Progressive enforcement

A progressive enforcement policy is recommended. Public sanctions should involve the following: (a) request the individual to stop and refer to the school policy; (b) if the person refuses to stop, request that the individual leave the site of the school function and refer to the school policy; and (c) if the person refuses to leave or is a repeat violator, refer to local authorities.

**Appendix D**

## CHECKLIST FOR MODEL TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOL POLICY

Instructions: Review your school districts’ current Tobacco-Free Policy and use the checklist below as a guide to determine where changes need to be made. Refer to the **Sample Policies and Regulations**on Page9to assist your school district in achieving a comprehensive status for your Tobacco-Free Policy.

1. The policy includes a statement explaining the rationale for the policy and definitions of tobacco and tobacco use.
2. Tobacco is specifically named in the policy, not implied by prohibiting drugs (such as alcohol and other drugs).
3. All components of the policy are effective at all times.
4. All school buildings, grounds, campuses, housing, property (including vehicles/busses), are tobacco free at all times.
5. Students are prohibited from possessing and/or using tobacco products on school grounds or at school events on school district property.
6. School staff is prohibited from using tobacco products on school grounds and at school events whether on or off campus.
7. Visitors are prohibited from using tobacco on school grounds and at school events whether on or off campus.
8. Wearing clothing or using other items that advertise or promote tobacco products is prohibited.
9. Tobacco advertising and acceptance of gifts from the tobacco industry is prohibited.
10. A plan to communicate the tobacco-free policy to all students, employees, and visitors is outlined.
11. An enforcement plan for students is outlined and provides cessation resource information.
12. An enforcement plan for employees is outlined and provides cessation resource information.
13. An enforcement plan for visitors is included.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Policy and Communication

[Be Tobacco Free](https://betobaccofree.hhs.gov/)

A U.S. Department of Health and Human Services resource that encourages youth and adults to be tobacco free.

[California Department of Public Health Tobacco Control Program](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CTCB/Pages/CaliforniaTobaccoControlBranch.aspx)

A program of the California Department of Public Health dedicated to reducing tobacco use through local health departments prevention projects, statewide media campaign, and competitively-selected state, regional and community-based projects.

[California School Boards Association](http://www.csba.org/)

The California School Boards Association (CSBA) is a collaborative group of virtually all of the state’s more than 1,000 school districts and county offices of education. The CSBA offers members fee-based services, including comprehensive policy services.

[Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco-Use and Addiction](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr4302.pdf)

These guidelines identify strategies most likely to be effective in preventing tobacco use and addiction among young people. The guidelines were developed by the CDC staff in collaboration with experts from other federal agencies, state agencies, universities, voluntary organizations, and professional associations.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Smoking and Tobacco-Use](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/)

CDC's Office on Smoking and Health offers information related to smoking and tobacco use.

[California Commercial Tobacco Control](https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/commercial-tobacco-control/california-commercial-tobacco-control)

The Public Health Law Center and the American Lung Association in California are funded by the California Tobacco Control Program at the California Department of Public Health to support commercial tobacco control professionals and advocates in their work to end the commercial tobacco epidemic in California.

[Tobacco Education and Research Oversight Committee (TEROC)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CTCB/Pages/TobaccoEducationAndResearchOversightCommittee.aspx)

Legislatively-mandated advisory committee charged with overseeing the use of Proposition 99 and Proposition 56 tobacco tax revenues for tobacco control and prevention education and for tobacco-related research. The Committee also publishes and periodically updates a state Master Plan for tobacco control and tobacco-related research, and makes recommendations to the California State Legislature for improving tobacco control and tobacco-related research efforts in California. The most recent Master Plan is Achieving Health Equity: Toward a Commercial Tobacco-Free California, 2021–22.[TEROC Master Plan](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CTCB/Pages/TEROCMasterPlan.aspx)

[Tobacco-Related Disease and Research Program (TRDRP)](http://www.trdrp.org/)

University of California program to administer the Proposition 99 research fund regarding tobacco use and the causes and treatment of diseases related to tobacco use.

### Cessation Services

[Kick it California](https://kickitca.org/)

A telephone-based program that can help you quit smoking. Helpline services are free, funded by the California Department of Health.

[How to Quit Vaping](https://smokefree.gov/)

A national resource from [smokefree.gov](https://smokefree.gov/) with information to help youth quit vaping. Learn about different tools to help you quit and how to use them.

[The Truth Initiative](https://truthinitiative.org/thisisquitting)

Inspiring Lives Free From Smoking, Vaping & Nicotine. Vaping cessation service from the Truth Initiative. Youth may text DITCHVAPE to 88709 to get started.

### Assessment and Technical Assistance

[California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys (CAL-SCHLS)](https://calschls.org/)

A project comprised of three interrelated surveys developed for and supported by the CDE:

1. [California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)](https://calschls.org/about/the-surveys/#chks)

Across California, the CHKS has led to a better understanding of the relationship between students' health behaviors and academic performance, and is frequently cited by state policymakers and the media as a critical component of school improvement efforts to help guide the development of more effective health, prevention, and youth development programs.

1. [The California School Staff Survey (CSSS)](https://calschls.org/about/the-surveys/#csss)

The CSSS provides a means to confidentially obtain staff perceptions about learning and teaching conditions for both general and special education, in order to regularly inform decisions about professional development, instruction, the implementation of learning supports, and school reform.

1. [The California School Parent Survey (CSPS)](https://calschls.org/about/the-surveys/#csps)

The CSPS is designed to provide teachers, administrators, and other school staff with information directly from parents that can be used to foster positive learning and teaching environments, parent involvement, and student achievement, health, and well-being.

[County Office of Education Tobacco-Use Prevention Education Coordinators](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/countycoordinators.asp)

A listing providing contact information for the Tobacco-Use Prevention Education Coordinators located in each California County Office of Education.

[California Tobacco-Free School District Certification](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/tobaccofreecert.asp)

Information about the CDE’s Tobacco-Free School Districts Certification process.