

PLAYING TOBACCO FREE: Making Your Community's Outdoor Recreational Facilities Tobacco Free

A Guide for Tobacco Control Advocates





Tobacco-Free Policies For Outdoor Recreational Facilities Make Sense. Here's Why:

Secondhand smoke harms everyone and kills thousands every year.

Exposure to secondhand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing 38,000 to 65,000 nonsmokers every year.¹

Secondhand smoke is harmful in outdoor settings.

According to a leading secondhand smoke expert, secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted (see page 2).²

Tobacco-free policies in outdoor settings are part of a national trend that has been taking place for several years.

Communities throughout the United States are creating tobacco-free outdoor recreational facilities out of concern for the health of their citizens. In addition to cities in Minnesota, cities in Texas, Arizona, New Jersey, New York, Florida, and California have adopted tobacco-free policies for their outdoor recreational facilities. California also has enacted a state law that prohibits tobacco use at playground and tot lot sandbox areas.

Tobacco-free policies help change community norms.

Tobacco-free policies establish the community norm that tobacco use is not an acceptable behavior for young people or adults.³

Most Minnesota parents support tobacco-free policies for outdoor playgrounds.

A 1998 survey showed that 68% of Minnesota parents support smoking bans in outdoor playgrounds and 80% support a ban in all public places where children are present.⁴

Tobacco-free policies enable leaders to model healthy lifestyle choices.

In a tobacco-free environment, coaches and recreational leaders become tobacco-free role models that send a powerful message to youth that tobacco use is not part of a healthy lifestyle.

Tobacco-free policies help break the connection between tobacco and sports.

For years the tobacco industry has sponsored and advertised at sporting events, misguiding young people's perception of tobacco use. Research indicates that sporting events expose youth to extensive tobacco use by people they view as positive role models.⁵

City-wide policies create a consistent tobacco-free policy for all outdoor youth recreational facilities in the community.

Since many school districts prohibit tobacco use at their outdoor facilities, a tobacco-free policy for city-owned outdoor youth recreational facilities creates continuity and eliminates confusion about which facilities are tobacco free. A tobacco-free policy also provides support to recreational organizations that already have an existing policy and use the city's facilities.

¹ American Cancer Society. "Clean Indoor Air." Online. Internet. 15 August 2002. Available: www.cancer.org/tobacco.htm

² Repace, J. (2000). "Banning Outdoor Smoking is Scientifically Justifiable." *Tobacco Control* 9, p. 97.

³ Forster, J. (2000). "Policy Approaches to Reducing Adolescent Tobacco Use." *Healthy Generations* 1 (1). University of Minnesota, School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology, Maternal & Child Health, p. 10.

⁴ Alesci, N. (2000). "Rationale for Outdoor Smoking Bans as a Youth Prevention Strategy." University of Minnesota.

⁵ Madden, P. & Grube, J. (1994). "The Frequency and Nature of Alcohol and Tobacco Advertising in Televised Sports, 1990 through 1992." *American Journal of Public Health* 84, pp. 279-299.

Banning Outdoor Smoking is **Scientifically Justifiable**

Failure to ban smoking in outdoor public venues [such as beaches and outdoor sporting areas] may expose nonsmokers to levels of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) as high or higher than received in indoor spaces where smoking is unrestricted.

The reality of atmospheric dispersion of ETS in outdoor settings is this: individual cigarettes are point sources of air pollution and, therefore, smoking in groups becomes an area source. Outdoor air pollutants from individual point sources are subject to plume rise if the temperature of the smoke plume is hotter than the surrounding air. However, if the plume has a small cross-section, as for a cigarette, it will rapidly cool and lose its upward momentum, and then will subside as the combustion particles and gases are heavier than air. Thus, in the case of no wind, the cigarette plume will rise to a certain height and then descend. In a case where a group of smokers are sitting in an outdoor café, on a hospital patio, or in stadium seats, their smoke will tend to saturate the local area with ETS.

Where there is wind, the amount of thermally induced plume rise will be inversely proportional to the wind velocity—doubling the wind velocity will halve the plume rise. In this case, the cigarette plume will resemble a cone tilted at an angle to the vertical. The width of the cone and its angle with the ground will depend upon the wind velocity: a higher wind will create a more horizontal cone, a smaller cone angle, and a higher concentration of ETS for downwind nonsmokers. If there are multiple cigarette sources, the downwind concentrations will consist of multiple intersecting cones—that is, overlapping plumes. As the wind direction changes, ETS pollution will be spread in various directions, fumigating downwind nonsmokers.

— **James Repace**
Secondhand Smoke Consultant
Repace Associates, Inc.
<www.repace.com>

Congratulations on your interest in making your city's outdoor recreational facilities tobacco free!

Whether you are a tobacco control advocate or a member of your local youth anti-tobacco advocacy group, the following steps will help prepare you to carry out your policy initiative. While we refer to city recreational facilities, these steps can be applied to other outdoor settings such as county recreational facilities, beaches, fairgrounds, rodeos, etc. While school grounds are often already tobacco free, current Minnesota state law does not require them to be. Check with your school district to determine what their policy covers, and follow the steps below if you need to advocate for the policy to be expanded to include school grounds.

**FOLLOW THESE STEPS
TO MAKE YOUR CITY'S
OUTDOOR
RECREATIONAL
FACILITIES
TOBACCO FREE**

Mobilize your Partnership (Steps 1-2)

Step 1: Assess your Readiness

Before you start, contact Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation (TFYR) to assess your tobacco prevention partnership's readiness to work on this policy initiative. As part of this assessment, TFYR will encourage you to involve as many tobacco prevention partners as possible in this policy initiative, since a larger partnership will increase the likelihood of your success in getting a tobacco-free policy passed. Likely partners include community health coalitions, American Cancer Society or American Lung Association volunteers/staff, school personnel, parent organizations, health care staff, and youth groups.

1

Step 2: Attend TFYR's Policy Initiative Training

Once TFYR has helped you decide that your tobacco prevention partnership is ready to work on a policy initiative, you should schedule TFYR's Policy Initiative Training and invite your partners to attend. This training will provide detailed information about the steps in this handbook and prepare your partnership for the policy initiative process.

2

Assess the Community (Steps 3-6)

Step 3: Find out Who Makes the Decisions

Making your city's outdoor recreational facilities tobacco free will likely require passage of a park policy or city ordinance. The city's park & recreation board typically passes park policies, whereas a city ordinance is passed by the city council. A park policy or city ordinance will both achieve the same goal, which is to create tobacco-free outdoor recreational facilities. In either case, it is important to gain the support of your park & recreation board since the city council relies on the park & recreation board to make policy recommendations relating to the city's recreational facilities. First, contact the city's park & recreation department to find out if an ordinance will be required or if the local park & recreation board has the authority to pass its own park policy. If your city does not have a park & recreation department/board, you can still follow the steps in this handbook by working directly with the city administrator and council.

3

Step 4: Find out the Facts

Work with your local tobacco prevention partnership to find out some key facts that will help form your policy request. Use the "Recreational Facility Inventory" on page 7 to determine what outdoor recreational facilities are present in your community and who owns and uses these facilities. Ask the park and recreation department for a list of these facilities. Determine whether or not those grounds are tobacco free. If a tobacco-free policy is in place, then be certain to verify whether or not signage and other implementation tools have been utilized to notify the community (see Step 17). If there is no existing policy, continue by gauging community support.

4

Step 5: Gauge Community Support

You can conduct a survey of the community to assess the level of support for your policy request. See page 8 for a "Sample Community Survey." If you are interested in knowing how the community supports other tobacco-free environments, recreation-related questions can be added to a larger survey. You can use your survey results in media-related activities (see Step 8) and in planning your presentation to the park board (see Step 12) to demonstrate the community's desire to have tobacco-free outdoor recreational facilities.

5

Step 6: Develop your Policy Request

Once you've collected the information required in Steps 3 & 4, begin to formalize your policy request. A comprehensive policy request will help ensure that the decision makers are considering a strong policy that will maximize the opportunity you have to change community norms and protect citizens from secondhand smoke. Your policy request should include the rationale behind the request, facilities you would like included, and recommendations for enforcing the policy. Use the "Sample Policy Request" on page 9 and TFYR's "Model Tobacco-Free Policy for Outdoor Recreational Facilities" on page 10 to help you form the specifics of the request. Review the list of facilities that do not have existing policies that you generated in Step 4 to help you determine what facilities you should request the city make tobacco free. Decide whether you will focus on youth recreational facilities or all parks and recreational facilities, since this will affect the rationale you use in your policy request.

6



Build Policy Support (Steps 7-10)

7

Step 7: Ask Community Members to Support your Policy Request

Once you've developed your policy request, begin contacting potential supporters to support the request. Local sports teams and recreational clubs, school officials, faith groups, coaches, parents, and youth are just a few groups and individuals you will want to contact. Use TFYR's advocacy materials to educate the community members on the importance of having tobacco-free recreational facilities in recreational settings. Involving youth in this policy initiative is key since they often bring a different perspective that can help decision makers understand the necessity of tobacco-free recreation facilities. Be certain to inform the potential supporters on the issues and explain why this policy would benefit their community. Ask all supportive organizations and individuals to sign the "Commitment of Support Form" on page 11 to show their support for your policy request.

Youth advocacy activities to help build support for tobacco-free outdoor recreational facilities:

- Use the TFYR advocacy materials to educate community members on the importance of having tobacco-free policies in outdoor recreational settings.
- Use petitions to gather support from youth and adults in the community. Create a petition, or use the "Commitment of Support Form" on page 11. Ask community members to write letters to the decision makers in support of the policy request (see Step 15).
- Collect cigarette butts in local outdoor recreational facilities to use as evidence. During your formal policy request, present your findings to the park board or council and explain the dangers of secondhand smoke and cigarette butts left as litter.

8

Step 8: Utilize the Media to Advocate for your Policy Request

The local media (newspapers, radio, TV stations) can be key in building community support for your policy request. If you have an existing relationship with a reporter or editor, meet with them to discuss the issue. If you do not, find out who covers the health or community beat and set up a meeting with them (see page 12 for "Tips for Working with the Media"). Be sure to plan ahead and bring a few pertinent handouts and ideas for storylines. If a reporter or editor does not have time to write an article, ask if you can submit an article about the harms of tobacco use and the benefits of a tobacco-free policy.

You can also utilize the media by submitting letters to the editor to educate the public about the importance of having tobacco-free recreational facilities. See page 13 for a "Sample Letter to the Editor." Other media-related activities include hosting an event and inviting the media to cover it, placing ads in the local newspaper, and asking local TV or radio stations to play Public Service Announcements about tobacco-free recreational facilities.

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Step 9: Find a Champion from Within

While you are building support in the community, begin building support with park & recreation staff and board members. If you or other supporters already know a staff or board member, begin by conducting an informal discussion with that person about your policy request. Use the "Discussion & Presentation Outline: Discussing Tobacco-Free Policies with City Officials" on page 14 to help guide your conversation. If there are no existing relationships, then a good starting point is to contact the city's park & recreation director or youth recreation programmer. Try to line up his or her support and get advice on how to best approach the issue. Find out who on the park & recreation board may be in support of this type of policy and how informed the board's members are on the issues.

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Step 10: Hold Informal Discussions with Decision Makers

Before bringing your request to the park & recreation board, try to meet individually with as many board members as you can. Bring along just one or two supporters to such meetings, including someone who knows the person you are meeting with, if possible. At your meetings, be as informal and educational as possible. Don't try to box anyone in a corner. If you push decision makers to state their opinion at this stage, it will be more difficult later for them to change their position. Instead, explain what you are trying to do, why it is important, and how they can play a part in helping reduce youth tobacco use in their community. Describe tobacco prevention resources (posters, pledges, etc.) you can provide them for their recreational programs and facilities. As in Step 9, refer to the "Discussion & Presentation Outline" on page 14. Describe the necessity of a comprehensive tobacco-free policy by reviewing TFYR's "Model Tobacco-Free Policy for Outdoor Recreational Facilities" (see page 10), and explain the requirements for receiving free signage through TFYR (see page 17). Offer them help with policy development and implementation. Based on initial feedback from your meetings, determine whether you can proceed with your policy request or if further education is needed.

Assist with Policy Adoption (Steps 11-16)

Step 11: Get on the Agenda

11

If you are ready to proceed with your policy request, the next step is to get on the agenda for the park & recreation board meeting. Contact your champion or the park & recreation director to indicate your interest in making a formal request for a tobacco-free policy at the park & recreation board's upcoming meeting. Determine when and where the meetings are held and how much time you will have at the meeting to make your request. Ask the park & recreation director for the deadline to include materials in the board's meeting packets. The resource you should include in the packets is TFYR's *Decision Maker's Guide to Tobacco-Free Policies for Outdoor Recreational Facilities*, which can be found in the back cover of this handbook.

Step 12: Plan your Presentation

12

Determine who will be speaking on behalf of your group when you make your policy request. A short testimonial from local youth, concerned parents, recreational leaders, and other supportive organizations will help demonstrate that tobacco use is a concern that stretches across society, affecting people of all ages. See the "Discussion & Presentation Outline" on page 14 for talking points for your presenters. Contact Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation at (651) 646-3005 to co-present with you. Anticipate questions relating to the necessity of the policy and how the policy will be enforced. See page 15, "Addressing Policy Myths," for tips to help you address policy arguments that may be mentioned at the meeting.

Step 13: Make the Presentation Count

13

At the park & recreation board meeting, have a broad cross section of people, including youth, parents, citizens, and supportive organizations in attendance during the presentation. Be certain to introduce the groups in attendance and present the list of organizations that have signed the "Commitment of Support Form" (found on page 11) to show community support for this policy. Present the information as your group planned in Step 12. Anticipate arguments and questions that might be asked during the presentation and be ready to respond.

Step 14: Assist in Policy Development

14

After your presentation, the board will often decide to further study the issue to determine what facilities and enforcement options should be included in their policy. If this is the case, provide them with any requested information or materials so that you can continue the momentum. Ask to be involved in any sub-committee or staff work group that is formed to develop a draft policy. During this time, provide technical assistance and guidance to help ensure the adoption of a strong policy. This will help decision makers avoid pitfalls that could lead to a weak policy (e.g. a policy that only discourages and does not prohibit tobacco use). Remind the policy committee of the policy components TFYR requires in order to receive free signage. See page 17 for details on these requirements.

Step 15: Continue Building Support

15

While the decision makers are developing a draft policy, continue recruiting supporters to help secure the policy's adoption when it is brought back to a board meeting for consideration. During this time you can encourage community members to send a letter expressing their support for the policy request. A "Sample Community Support Request Letter" can be found on page 16. Use this letter to contact interested community members to ask them to support your policy request. Refer to the information in Step 8 on media advocacy and continue those activities until a final decision about your policy request has been made.

Step 16: Attend Remaining Public Hearings

16

Determine when the park & recreation board will be ready to vote on their draft policy. Attend the meeting with the policy supporters to answer any final questions and to offer support for the policy. Remember to be respectful of the outcome, even if your request is denied. If denied, continue your relationship with the department and bring your request back at a later date. If the board votes to recommend the policy to the city council for final approval, attend the city council meeting with the supporters in case the council has any questions that need to be answered. Find out ahead of time if the city council will hear testimony and prepare a brief statement in support of the policy request. Once the policy is adopted, be certain to thank them for their decision. Follow Step 17 for ways you can help with the policy's implementation.

Life after Policy Adoption (Steps 17-18)

Step 17: Assist with Policy Implementation

17

Be certain to work with the city park & recreation department after policy adoption to demonstrate your commitment to involving them in your efforts to reduce youth tobacco use. Start by publicly recognizing the city and the department for its efforts. Help them carry out their implementation and enforcement plan by assisting with signage, user and staff notification, and other strategies outlined in their policy. If the city is interested in the free signage available through Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation, have them complete the order form on page 17.

Step 18: Look for Opportunities to Promote the Tobacco-Free Message

18

Look for community events coordinated by the department (activity registration, Team Photo Night, etc.) as opportunities to educate the community on the importance of having tobacco-free environments. Provide recreational leaders and staff with materials so they can explain the policy to youth to help them better understand why they should be tobacco free. By offering prevention posters, pledges, banners, and other resources you can also help the department reinforce the tobacco-free message. See TFYR's "Creating Healthy Communities: Using Recreation as a Tool for Tobacco Prevention" at <www.ansrmn.org> for more ideas on how to continue your partnership.

Recreational Facility **Inventory**



EXAMPLE

Facility Name/Address	Facility Type*	Owner/Operator Contact Info.	Decision-Making Body	Existing Tobacco-Free Policy & Signage?	Regular Facility Users
<i>Yourtown Athletic Complex</i>	<i>2 adult softball fields, 4 youth baseball fields, 1 playground structure</i>	<i>Yourtown Park & Rec; Jill Johnson 234-6000</i>	<i>Yourtown Park Board; Mike Wilson, chair</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>youth baseball association, adult softball association, families/children</i>

Community Survey

SAMPLE

We would like to know what you think about tobacco-free recreational places for our community. Please answer the following questions.

I support NO TOBACCO USE in the following places:

(For each place, circle the number on the scale that best describes how you feel).

1. Community centers	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
2. Indoor sports arenas	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
3. Outdoor sports facilities	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
4. Parks	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
5. Playgrounds	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
6. Skateboard/bike parks	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
7. Beaches	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
8. Vehicles transporting youth to recreational activities	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
9. Other _____	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree

I support NO TOBACCO USE for the following individuals during youth recreational events:

1. Coaches/youth leaders	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
2. Youth sports officials	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree
3. Spectators attending events	strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	strongly agree

Where do you live?

- In [insert your community's name] Within 20 miles of [insert your community's name]
 Over 20 miles from [insert your community's name]

What is your age?

- 6-10 11-17 18-24 25-39 40-50 51+

Are you a...

- (check all that apply)
- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Parent | <input type="radio"/> Youth leader/coach | <input type="radio"/> Non-smoker |
| <input type="radio"/> Grandparent | <input type="radio"/> Youth sports official | <input type="radio"/> Smoker |
| | | <input type="radio"/> Former smoker |

Policy Request

SAMPLE

(Note: This request was developed to focus on all outdoor recreational facilities. If you are working on outdoor youth recreational facilities, you should customize this request accordingly).

As citizens of Yourtown, we are asking the City of Yourtown's Park & Recreation Board to adopt a tobacco-free policy for the city's outdoor recreational facilities for the following reasons:

- Secondhand smoke is harmful in both indoor and outdoor settings. Exposure to secondhand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States.
- Children and adults using city recreational facilities should not be exposed to the deadly effects of secondhand smoke and cigarette butts that are often present in these areas.
- The Yourtown Park & Recreation Department has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of our community's children and adults while they use the city's recreation facilities, and adopting a tobacco-free policy is part of this responsibility.
- By having policies, we can ensure that coaches, parents and other role models do not use tobacco in recreational settings, sending our children the message that tobacco use is an unhealthy behavior.

Proposed Tobacco-Free Facilities

All playgrounds, youth athletic fields/courts/rinks/parks
(softball, baseball, soccer, hockey, tennis, basketball, football, skateboard, etc.)

•
Beaches: Birch Lake Beach, Lake Ida Beach and Fishing Pier

•
Entrances to Johnson Memorial Hockey Arena (building is already tobacco free)

•
Yourtown Municipal Golf Course, Birch Mountain Ski Slope, Wilson Stadium

•
Central Park & Rose Garden, Yourtown City Zoo

•
City-owned hiking/walking/biking trails

Proposed Policy Enforcement Plan

In order to most effectively educate the community about this policy and ensure compliance, we suggest the following enforcement plan:

1. Appropriate signs as directed by the Park & Recreation Director shall be posted in the above specified areas.
2. The community, especially facility users and staff, will be notified about this policy (policy manual, newsletter, pledges).
3. Park & Recreation staff will make periodic observations of recreational facilities to monitor for compliance.
4. Any person found violating this policy may be subject to immediate ejection from the recreation facility for the remainder of the event.

City-Owned Outdoor Recreational Facilities

MODEL TOBACCO-FREE POLICY

- WHEREAS,** the City believes that tobacco use in the proximity of children and adults engaging in or watching outdoor recreational activities at City-owned or operated facilities is detrimental to their health and can be offensive to those using such facilities; and
- WHEREAS,** the City has a unique opportunity to create and sustain an environment that supports a non-tobacco norm through a tobacco-free policy, rule enforcement, and adult-peer role modeling on City-owned outdoor recreational facilities; and
- WHEREAS,** the City believes parents, leaders, and officials involved in recreation are role models for youth and can have a positive effect on the lifestyle choices they make; and
- WHEREAS,** the tobacco industry sponsors and advertises at recreational events to foster a connection between tobacco use and recreation; and
- WHEREAS,** cigarettes, once consumed in public spaces, are often discarded on the ground, requiring additional maintenance expenses, diminishing the beauty of the City's recreational facilities, and posing a risk to toddlers due to ingestion; and
- WHEREAS,** the City Park & Recreation Board determines that the prohibition of tobacco use at the City's recreational facilities serves to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of our City.

Section 1: Tobacco use prohibited in outdoor recreational facilities

No person shall use any form of tobacco at or on any City-owned or operated outdoor recreational facilities, including the restrooms, spectator and concession areas. These facilities include [insert specific facilities here, e.g. playgrounds, athletic fields, beaches, aquatic areas, parks, and walking/hiking trails].

Section 2: Enforcement

1. Appropriate signs shall be posted in the above specified areas.
2. The community, especially facility users and staff, will be notified about this policy.
3. Staff will make periodic observations of recreational facilities to monitor for compliance.
4. Any person found violating this policy may be subject to immediate ejection from the recreation facility for the remainder of the event.

Section 3: Effective Date

This policy statement is effective immediately upon the date of adoption.

Appropriate City Official

Date

Commitment of Support Form for Tobacco-Free Outdoor Recreational Facilities

We support tobacco-free policies for our community's outdoor recreational facilities for the following reasons:

- Tobacco use in the proximity of children and adults engaging in or watching recreational events is detrimental to their health.
- Our youth recreational organizations have a unique opportunity to create and sustain an environment that supports a non-tobacco norm through a tobacco-free policy for our community's outdoor recreational facilities.
- Parents, leaders, and officials are role models for youth and can have a positive effect on the lifestyle choices they make.
- Cigarettes, once consumed in public spaces, are often discarded on the ground requiring additional maintenance expenses, diminishing the beauty of our community's recreational facilities, and posing a risk to toddlers due to ingestion.
- Prohibiting tobacco use at our community's recreational facilities serves to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents of our community.

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

Name/Org.

Phone/Email

TIPS

for Working with the Media

1 Don't raise issues with the media until you have determined what your policy request will look like. If you don't have a specific answer when a reporter asks how the secondhand smoke problem should be solved, you are not ready to be talking to a reporter.

2 Designate a key media spokesperson. Limiting who can speak to the media allows one person to become polished in this area, and your coalition's key messages are more likely to be included in the news story. Make sure other members of the organization are aware of this policy.

3 When a reporter calls for an interview, always ask for the reporter's deadline.

4 Give the media only the facts you are comfortable sharing. Prepare a page of talking points you can use in the interview and leave with the reporter (see the "Discussion and Presentation Outline" on page 14).

5 Anticipate questions and formulate succinct answers to them. Possible questions might be: Why is this issue important? How can this problem be solved?

6 Never go "off the record," and never lie. If you make a mistake in an interview, correct yourself. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it, offer to check on it and call them back.

7 Don't let the media hurry you. A timely answer is important, but you do not have to answer on the spot. Instead, set a deadline to get back to the reporter, take time to gather the information you need, and then respond.

8 Use personal stories as examples, but be careful to help reporters tell stories that have a human face but that also note the relevant history and context of the article.

9 Recognize that you cannot control what reporters write, but only what you say to them. Be sure to give them only what you want to see in print.

Letter to the Editor

SAMPLE

In Yourtown, smoking among youth is a prominent problem. According to the Yourtown Student Survey, ___% of Yourtown 12th grade students and ___% of Yourtown 9th grade students currently use tobacco. When our youth use tobacco, they are ingesting thousands of chemicals. These chemicals cause lung, throat, and mouth cancer, as well as bronchitis and emphysema. Tobacco use also inhibits lung growth, causes muscle fatigue, raises blood pressure, and leads to heart disease. What's more—the nicotine in tobacco is extremely addictive, making it very difficult to break the smoking addiction.

Why do our young people start smoking? They are influenced by people around them who smoke. Friends, family, and other adult leaders are key role models in whether or not youth choose to use tobacco. How can we, as a community, work to ensure that youth are surrounded by positive role models? We can start by being positive role models ourselves. One way we can do this is by prohibiting tobacco use at our recreational facilities and playgrounds. Prohibiting tobacco use reinforces to our youth that tobacco use is unacceptable and shows them that we, as adults, care about their health.

By prohibiting tobacco use at our recreational facilities and playgrounds, we are also protecting all of our citizens from the dangers of secondhand smoke. Over 3,000 nonsmokers in the United States die from lung cancer every year due to exposure to secondhand smoke. Since secondhand smoke saturates the air around smokers, outdoor secondhand smoke levels can reach levels as high as those found indoors.

I urge you, as responsible, caring citizens of our community, to support a tobacco-free policy at our city's recreational facilities and playgrounds. Take time to discuss this important issue with city park board members and city council members. Urge them to vote in favor of our future by protecting the health of the young people living in our community!

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Concerned Citizen

*****Check with your local newspaper to find out specific word-count limitations for a letter to the editor.**

Discussion & Presentation Outline:

Discussing Tobacco-Free Policies with City Officials

Local Policy Request Representative

- Introduce yourself and the supporting organizations/members in attendance.
- Explain the rate of youth tobacco use in your community, and distribute any pertinent information you may have about this topic. Quickly summarize how your group/organization is working to reduce youth tobacco use and your desire to involve the city as well.
- State your policy request by explaining what you are asking them to consider, including the rationale for your request and the specific facilities that are part of the policy request.

TFYR staff or Local Policy Request Representative

- Show the list of cities that have recently made their outdoor recreational facilities tobacco free (specifically mention cities in your area).
- Explain that this recent trend is occurring for the following reasons:
 - These cities understand the important role they can play in reducing youth tobacco use (stress the health & welfare of the citizens).
 - Policies for city-owned facilities create consistency for youth recreation facilities in the community, since most school districts prohibit tobacco use at their outdoor facilities.
 - Policies for city-owned facilities support local groups (soccer clubs, etc.) who use city facilities and promote healthy lifestyles.
 - Discarded cigarette butts cause litter, maintenance expenses, and can be ingested by toddlers using those facilities.
- Explain what a successful tobacco-free policy looks like:
 - A comprehensive policy prohibits participants & spectators from using all forms of tobacco.
 - The policy outlines the facilities that are included, as well as a strong user notification and policy enforcement plan.
- Share how the local tobacco prevention partnership and TFYR can assist them with policy development and implementation (permanent signage, periodic monitoring by park staff for compliance, and written methods such as policy manuals, newsletters, etc.).
 - Show TFYR's free signage and explain qualification process (see page 17).

Concerned Parent, Youth, and/or Citizen

- Ask one or two community members to follow the speakers above by giving a brief testimony on why they support the policy request. Suggest they describe a specific experience or concern they have relating to tobacco use in outdoor recreational facilities.

Supporting Organization

- Ask one or two community organizations or clubs (e.g. school district representative, YMCA, local soccer club) to give a brief testimony for their support of the policy request and ask them to explain how their own tobacco-free policy has benefited their organization.

Local Policy Request Representative

- Finish the presentation by summarizing your group's desire for the city to protect the health and welfare of the community by passing a tobacco-free policy for its outdoor recreational facilities.

Addressing Policy Myths:

The Truth Behind Tobacco-Free Recreation

Myth #1

vs.

REALITY

Kids that see adults using tobacco products are not likely to start using tobacco.

Thousands of teenagers start smoking every day, in part because they see their adult role models using tobacco or allowing its use in public places. How do children learn to walk? To talk? To play sports? From adults! Adult habits DO affect our youth.

Myth #2

vs.

REALITY

Cigarette butts discarded on the ground do not really hurt anything.

Cigarette butts are not biodegradable, meaning they do not decay and cannot be absorbed by the environment. In fact, cigarette butts remain intact for about 10 years before breaking apart, which amounts to tons of litter. Also, toddlers may ingest the butts that are discarded on the ground.

Myth #3

vs.

REALITY

Policies that restrict tobacco use at outdoor recreational facilities will restrict tobacco users from these facilities and events.

Tobacco-free policies for outdoor recreational facilities and events do not restrict people from using these facilities or attending these events; rather, they only ensure that tobacco users refrain from using tobacco for a short period of time in order to protect the health of community members, and especially children, who are using these facilities.

Myth #4

vs.

REALITY

Recreation-based tobacco-free policies are needless regulations and a governmental interference.

Tobacco-free policies are public park policies similar to those prohibiting alcohol use or littering in public parks and recreational facilities. It is the duty of policy makers to enact policies that protect the health and well being of the citizens of their community.

Myth #5

vs.

REALITY

Tobacco-free policies for recreational facilities will be impossible to enforce.

Eighty percent of all Minnesota adults do not smoke.⁶ Therefore, tobacco-free policies are largely self-enforcing and can be properly enforced with a combination of adequate signage and community education about the policy. Any infraction can be reported and handled in the same manner as an alcohol or litter complaint that may occur at these facilities.

Community Support Request Letter

SAMPLE

[Insert date]

Dear Community Member:

The City of Yourtown is considering a tobacco-free policy for its outdoor recreational facilities, including city-owned playgrounds, youth athletic fields, and other facilities used by children. The Yourtown Tobacco-Free Coalition is requesting the adoption of this policy in order to protect the health and welfare of the children using these facilities. After much discussion, the Yourtown Park and Recreation Commission decided to further study the issue prior to their next meeting.

Your support is needed to ensure that the Park & Recreation Commission understands that you, as community members, support tobacco-free environments for our community's children. If you would like to help with this effort, please write letters of support to the City's Park & Recreation Commission. We also encourage you to discuss this issue with your friends and neighbors to help us gain support for tobacco-free recreation in Yourtown.

Here are some things that you may want to include in your letter:

- As a citizen of the City of Yourtown that uses Yourtown recreational facilities, you support policies that create tobacco-free environments for the children of Yourtown to play in.
- Children playing in and around city recreational facilities should not be forced to be exposed to the deadly effects of secondhand smoke and the cigarette butts that are often present in these areas.
- The Yourtown Park & Recreation Department has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of our community's children while they use the city's recreation facilities, and adopting a tobacco-free policy is part of this responsibility.
- By having policies, we can ensure that coaches, parents and other role models do not use tobacco in recreational settings, which would send our children the message that tobacco use is an unhealthy behavior.

Please personalize these talking points with your own experiences and send your letter to the chairperson of the Park & Recreation Commission. Please send your letter to [insert Park & Recreation Commission Chairperson's name and address here].

If you have any questions regarding this initiative and the work we are doing with the City of Yourtown, please feel free to contact me at [insert your contact information]. Thank you for supporting tobacco-free environments.

Sincerely,

[insert your name here]

Yourtown Tobacco-Free Coalition

(Note: This letter is focused on all youth recreational facilities. If you are working on all outdoor recreational facilities, you should customize this request accordingly).

Order Your Signage

FREE

Minnesota cities that adopt comprehensive tobacco-free policies for their outdoor recreational facilities can order **FREE** permanent 12" x 16" metal signage from TFYR to help with policy implementation.

To qualify for the signs, the tobacco-free policy must include:

- A list of all the facilities it covers
- A statement that all forms of tobacco use are prohibited
- An enforcement plan that includes a) user and staff notification; and b) signage

Once a city is sure that their tobacco-free policy qualifies for the free signs, they should complete the order form below and send it to Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation, along with a copy of the approved policy.

It's free!



SIGN #1



SIGN #2

ORDER FORM

Please fill out and return order form with a copy of your city policy to:

Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation
2395 University Avenue West, Suite 310
St. Paul, MN 55114-1512

Phone: (651) 646-3005; Fax: (651) 646-0142; tfyr@ansrmn.org

On _____, the city of _____ passed the attached tobacco-free policy prohibiting the use of tobacco products on its outdoor recreational facilities.

Please send us the following number of 12" x 16" metal signs:

*"Tobacco Use is NOT ALLOWED
On This Park Property"*

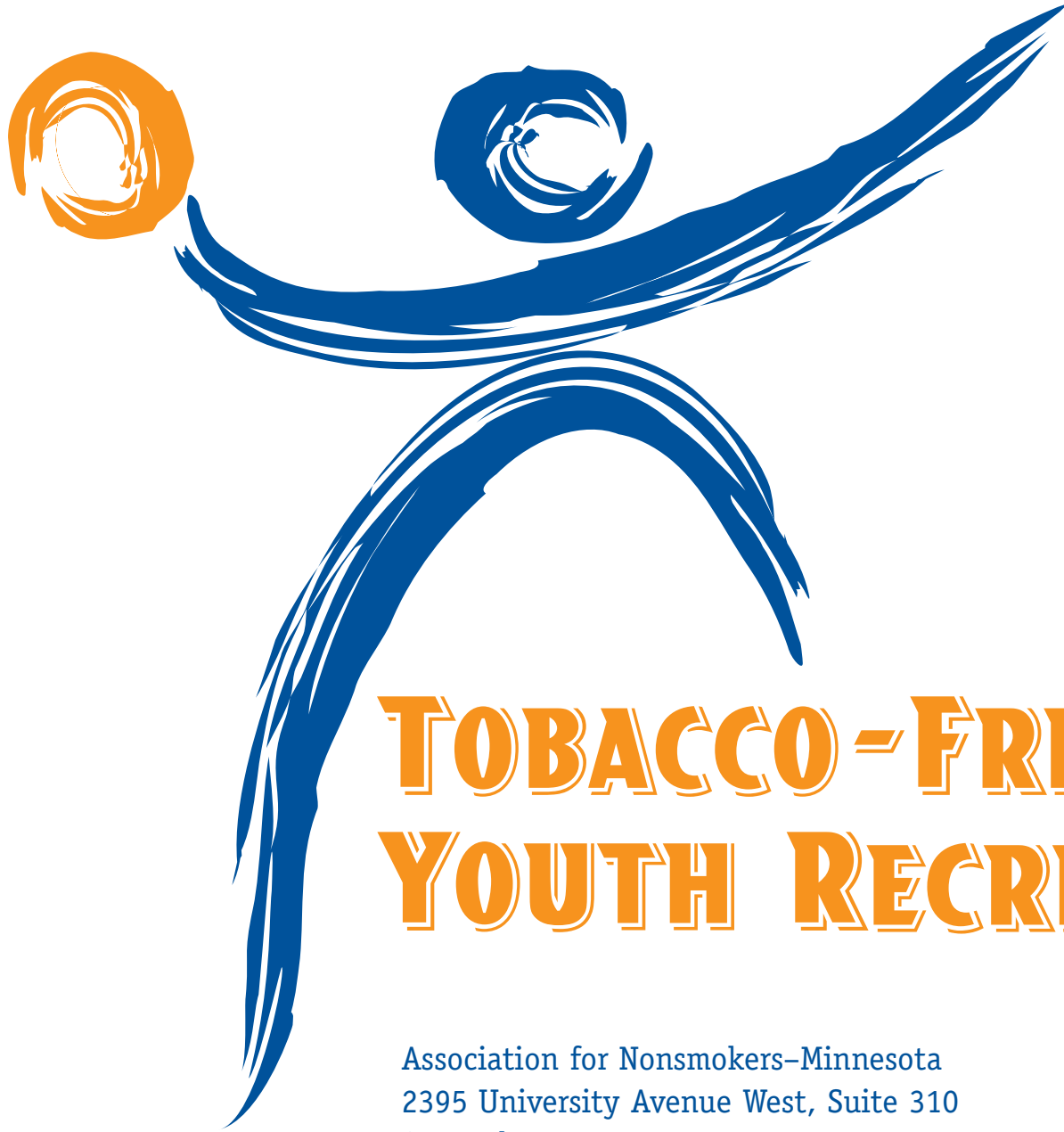
*"Tobacco Use is NOT ALLOWED
During Youth Activities"*

Please send sign(s) to:

Name/Organization _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____



TOBACCO-FREE YOUTH RECREATION

Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota
2395 University Avenue West, Suite 310
St. Paul, MN 55114-1512

Phone: (651) 646-3005

Fax: (651) 646-0142

tfyr@ansrmn.org