

Playing Tobacco Free:

Tobacco-Free Policies For Park & Recreation Facilities

Tobacco-Free Park and Recreation Areas Promote Health

- **Parks are established to promote healthy activities.** The purpose of park areas is to promote community wellness, and tobacco-free policies fit with this idea.
- **Secondhand smoke harms everyone.** The 2006 Surgeon General's report concludes that secondhand smoke is a human carcinogen for which there is no safe level of exposure. Exposure to secondhand smoke has immediate health consequences on the cardiovascular and respiratory systems.
- **Secondhand smoke is harmful in outdoor settings.** According to Repace Associates, secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted.
- **Cigarette litter is dangerous.** Discarded cigarettes pollute the land and water and may be ingested by toddlers, pets, birds, or fish.
- **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 within the entire community.
- **Tobacco-free environments promote positive community role modeling** and protect the health, safety, and welfare of community members.
- **Policies provide consistency among community athletic facilities and groups.** The majority of community sporting events are held at either city or school athletic facilities, and nearly all school districts prohibit tobacco use on their entire grounds. Also, many community athletic associations have tobacco-free policies but use city recreation facilities and would benefit from a city-wide policy.

The Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation Initiative

Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation (TFYR) is Minnesota's statewide recreation-based tobacco prevention program that assists recreational groups in promoting healthy tobacco-free lifestyles. TFYR offers assistance in tobacco-free policy development and implementation and also distributes materials that promote the tobacco-free sports message throughout Minnesota. Contact TFYR for policy assistance or more information!



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Tobacco-Free Park and Recreation Policies Work

Nearly 100 Minnesota cities and counties have adopted tobacco-free policies for their outdoor recreation facilities and park areas. In 2004, the University of Minnesota surveyed Minnesota residents to learn about the level of support for tobacco-free park and recreation policies. Minnesota park directors were also interviewed to ask how they felt about tobacco-free policies. Here are the study's key findings:

What Minnesota residents say:

- **Most Minnesotans support tobacco-free park and recreation policies.** 70% of Minnesota residents support tobacco-free park and recreation areas. In addition, 66% of golfers and 73% of families with children support these policies.
- **Policies should prohibit all forms of tobacco.** 79% of residents supported tobacco-free policies that prohibit all forms of tobacco use, including spit tobacco.
- **Parks should be tobacco free at all times.** Just over half (53%) of respondents supported the prohibition of tobacco use in parks at all times.
- **Community members support policy enforcement.** 79% of Minnesotans felt that policies should be enforced by asking violators to leave park areas. 64% felt that violators should be fined.

What Minnesota park directors say:

- **Park directors overwhelmingly recommend adopting tobacco-free policies.** 90% of park directors in cities with policies reported that they would recommend tobacco-free policies to other communities.
- **Nearly all park directors personally supported tobacco-free policies.** Out of the 257 park directors interviewed,
 - 96% wanted to establish positive role models for youth.
 - 92% wanted to reduce youth opportunity to smoke.
 - 92% wanted to avoid litter from cigarette butts.
 - 89% wanted to promote community well-being.
- **Policies reduce litter and maintenance costs.** 58% of Minnesota park directors in cities with policies reported cleaner park areas.
- **Policy enforcement and violations are not issues.** In Minnesota communities with a policy, few park directors (26%) reported compliance issues and 74% reported no problems with park users violating the policy.