

CDC *Vital Signs* Town Hall Teleconference
Q&A

A Breath of Fresh Air: Reducing Secondhand Smoke in Multiunit Housing
February 10, 2015
2:00 pm (EST)

Dr. Dan Baden: All right. Thank you very much Kara. Thank you for all these wonderful presentations. And for the listeners, I want to remind you that you can get in queue to ask a question by pressing star one. You'll say your name when prompted and the operator will announce you when it is your turn.

I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to share your own strategies, lessons you've learned, challenges you've endured, and success stories so we can have more of a dialogue.

As we get ready to start going or as we went through this presentation, I'm reminded of a family I knew when I was in medical school. A friend of mine was a nurse and both her parents were long time smokers. Her father had stopped smoking after he developed COPD and was required to be on oxygen all the time.

And I remember a discussion in their kitchen, where the mother was saying that her husband didn't mind her smoking because it didn't bother him. And he looked over at her and said it makes it harder to breath. And I've remember that for 20, 25 years.

But it just drove home how easy it is for people to rationalize the way the impact that their smoking has on other people. So along that line, let's jump straight to the lines. It looks like we may have some questions, operator?

Coordinator: We do, the first question comes from Warren Ortland, your line is open.

Warren Ortland: Yes, hi, this is Warren Ortland with the Public Health Center in Minnesota. And I had a question for Gail from Boston. And I was just curious, has there been any legal challenges to the enforcement or implementation of the policy for the Boston Public Housing Authority?

Gail Livingston: No. We have not had any legal challenges to the policy itself. You know, when we were first implementing it, people had said, you know, we're going to bring a lawsuit and we haven't had one. And I think that this is not something that we would have particularly, you know, we've obviously gotten advice from our lawyers, etc. and we have not had any of this kind of challenge.

Warren Ortland: Okay, thank you.

Coordinator: Thank you, the next question comes from Bud Offermann, your line's open.

Bud Offermann: Yes, I was just curious how these policies have been coping with the new electronic cigarettes. So I haven't heard the word mentioned so I don't know if like the things are just tobacco smoking or are they being extended to electronic cigarettes?

Kara Skahen: Great question. This is Kara from Minnesota. At Live Smoke Free we do recommend that electronic cigarettes are included in the smoke-free policy. This is really for two reasons.

One that there are potentially harmful substances in the aerosol produced and two, including electronic cigarettes in the policy substantially helps reduce confusion among residents and guests so it does aid in enforcement.

What we're seeing in Minnesota is that the majority of property managers are choosing to include electronic cigarettes in their policy largely because it makes enforcement easier for them.

Bud Offermann: That's excellent. ASHRAE, which is, you know, the ventilation engineers right? They just published an extension to their standard 62 ventilations standard that extends the policies regarding tobacco smoke indoors which is basically not allowed, to e-cigarettes.

But of course there are states now even with marijuana, right so really I think where we're at is with ASHRAE, we'll be extending it to cover vaporization or smoking of any substances. So clove cigarettes, for instance, cannabis, just everything. So something to consider also, there are other things besides e-cigarettes and tobacco smoke.

Kara Skahen: Thanks for sharing.

Bud Offermann: All right, thank you.

Coordinator: The next question is from Maura Proser, your line is open.

Maura Proser: My question is for Gail. When you mentioned reasonable accommodation as an ongoing issue. Can you describe what kind of accommodations? We've had questions about if somebody is disabled and can't get outside to smoke, is that an issue and I'm curious about what other kinds of accommodation issues you've had?

Gail Livingston: Yes, so, I think that, you know, more so than a legal challenge to the policy itself, from the beginning we were more, I don't want to say concerned, but

we gave a lot more thought to the issue of reasonable accommodation, thinking that people would ask for a reasonable accommodation to continue smoking in their unit.

We had a flurry of reasonable accommodation requests, not that many, probably not more than a dozen or a dozen and a half, early on in the policy. And we have not, we did not grant any reasonable accommodation to smoke in the unit.

When folks cited a difficulty in going outside, we would accommodate them by putting them in a unit that was closer, you know, say on the first floor so they didn't have to take the elevator down or closer to the door so it would be easier for them to get outside.

But we sort of took an internal stand initially that to start granting reasonable accommodations to smoke in the unit, would really hamstring the policy from the beginning. And we haven't had any challenges, any legal challenges to our denial of reasonable accommodations either.

Maura Proser: Great, thanks.

Coordinator: The next question comes from Laura Galvin, your line is open.

Laura Galvin: Oh good. Hi, I live in a high rise in Bethesda, Maryland. It would be really helpful to have a listing state-by-state of the condos and co-ops that have gone totally smoke-free, both in the units and on the balconies. And I've already, well I've been waiting on the phone to ask the question.

I've been looking at Minnesota's smoke-free housing website but I don't see anything related to Maryland. I would love to have that information or if

there is a source that you might know of, that would be really helpful to persuade our board to take up the initiative to make our building smoke-free. That'd be number one.

My other question is also to demonstrate that the values of those co-ops and condos have gone up, that would also help make the case. So basically, a state-by-state listing of condos and co-ops in Maryland, Virginia, DC and I would take that around the country as well, aside from Minnesota. And number two, to demonstrate that the value of the property would go up because of the fact that you have a smoke-free complex.

Joel London: Hi Laura this is Joel London with the Office on Smoking and Health at CDC and I'm happy to follow up with you. You can email me at my email address is the letter j, my last name London like the city.

Laura Galvin: Yes, Joel, that's fine, I'll take it, I work with Mark.

Joel London: Yes. Also, and I can put you in touch with the best, the best list is usually found on the Americans for Nonsmokers Rights page and we can get you that list and I'm happy for any of the other speakers to follow up with any response they might want to share with Laura.

Laura Galvin: That'd be great Joel, I'm sorry to interrupt. I wanted to get your email anyway Joel. If you could just repeat that, it'd be great.

Joel London: Sure, jlondon@cdc.gov.

Laura Galvin: Great, thank you.

Kara Skahen: Hi Laura, this is Kara from Minnesota. You bring up a really excellent question and I think I've received many calls from condo owners with that exact same question. I can speak for Minnesota, we are starting to track that information within Minnesota and I have actually spoken with some real estate agents who have some interesting anecdotes as far as re-sale values.

Unfortunately we haven't done any official research on this topic, but that's something that I can certainly send you additional information from Minnesota. But I do encourage you to contact the smoke-free housing initiative that's located in Baltimore. And that can be found in the global directory of smoke-free housing programs and that link is within the slide and also on our website.

Laura Galvin: Okay, thank you, I'll definitely check that out.

Coordinator: Thank you, the next question comes from Kristen Wills, your line is open.

Kristen Wills: Hi, so I'm not quite sure who this question should go to but I was wondering if any of you had experience with and how you've responded to any organizations, for instance, we've got our housing authority who've taken some of their housing smoke-free and consider it a failure because people are smoking on the sidewalks.

Gail Livingston: Well, this is Gail. I mean, as long as the sidewalks are, for us as long as the sidewalks are more than 15 feet from the entry of the building and away from the building, we consider that success because that's where we want people to be smoking.

You know, as I said, you know, we're happy if people would stop smoking and we've had people say oh, well this is going to be the encouragement I

needed to really try to stop smoking. But, if people are smoking, take the smoke outside, that's what we're trying to get them to do.

Kristen Wills: Yes, I've considered it a success as well. I'm just not quite sure how to respond when they don't want to continue the policy or continue the policy in other places because they see that smoking out front as a failure.

Gail Livingston: Well, I guess the conversation is what, so how do they define success? What, they, I mean, so I guess I don't know how to respond either. I mean it's the decision what are you trying to accomplish? And I think that the public health and the property management objectives are to not have people smoke in the units because a. it's healthier for people, b. it decreases maintenance costs if people are not smoking inside.

And so that's what we're trying to get at, I mean, you know, the behavior modification is not to stop smoking, the behavior modification is to don't smoke inside, smoke outside. You know, it sounds to me like people are looking for an excuse not to, I shouldn't say that.

Kristen Wills: I just wanted to see how other people would respond.

Gail Livingston: I don't understand that response, let me just leave it at that.

Kara Skahen: This is Kara from Minnesota. I tend to agree with Gail. And I guess my follow up question would be is the policy not being followed in terms of, you know, is there a designated smoking area that residents aren't smoking where they should be smoking. I agree, I think it's a really good thing if people are smoking outdoors and not indoors but if the challenge is that they're not smoking in the correct location. Then the issue might be increasing resident education or involving, for example, social workers on site who might be

working closely with the residents and might help them, you know, change the behavior. So, you know, it might be an issue of increasing resident education or more closely involving other staff on the property as well.

Kristen Wills: Okay, thank you.

Coordinator: The next question is from Peter Ashley, your line is open.

Peter Ashley: Hello, thanks for your presentations, Gail and Kara, really appreciate it. This is a follow-up related to the previous question. Kara you mentioned the, you know, if a property owner included the property grounds as an area where smoking is banned, that that's, you know, a benefit.

But, you know, I think for housing providers, they would have to make that decision pretty cautiously because you could be creating a problem on your neighbor's property. So smokers would go possibly to the neighboring properties and smoke. And also, to me it seems like it's kind of harsh, because it's an addictive behavior and if you don't give them an outlet, to me it seems like it's kind of harsh.

I'm with HUD so take the housing perspective. And I've seen this, somewhat of a division on this subject between housing providers and tobacco control advocates. So just want to hear your reactions. Thanks.

Kara Skahen: Absolutely. This is Kara. Thank you for your comment. I agree that it can be incredibly challenging especially if the multiunit housing is located in an urban area where there isn't a lot of outdoor space to begin with. So absolutely it can be challenging.

I'd say what we have found in Minnesota is that the majority of housing providers. And I'm speaking from a public housing perspective here. The public housing that I'm aware of has taken the approach where it's 100% smoke-free indoors and I'm only aware of off the top of my head, only one public housing provider that it has 100% curb to curb property.

So typically, that isn't the norm. If it is the norm, it tends to be a policy that's really graduated over time. So for example, that property might start with one smoke-free building on the property, then include additional buildings within that property and then eventually down the road include the entire property. But that, speaking honestly, that is pretty rare and most housing providers do focus on 100% smoke-free indoors. Does that address your question?

Peter Ashley: Yes, thank you. I wonder if Gail had any thoughts on that?

Gail Livingston: Yes, well we, one of the things that we did in terms of resident engagement was to work with the resident organizations that there is, if there was one at the property, to talk about what areas would be okay, you know, what outdoor areas would be all right for smoking.

For instance if there's a patio that's right outside, you know, maybe that's not good. People's balconies, no, no we can't do that because that's just like being in your unit. So we set this perimeter and most places it's about 15 feet away from the building.

Because if you have people sitting right outside the building smoking then, you know, it can drift into people's windows right above them, etc. and we wanted to avoid that so we wanted to get people not only outside the

building but a little bit away from it. But we do not have a completely campus smoke-free area.

And I think that, you know, that's just easier to. We have had some very interesting tenant interactions where we've had to go out there and actually measure for folks. Okay this is 15 feet so your neighbor can smoke here but not there, kind of thing.

Peter Ashley: Got you.

Dr. Dan Baden: So we probably have time for one more question.

Coordinator: Okay, the next question is from Sharon McAllister, your line is open.

Sharon McAllister: Yes, hi. I was just wondering for those like the manager who is a smoker or the owner for the multi-housing, what incentives do you have like for the property management to have the SFH (smoke-free home) in place or because I'm assuming it's not mandatory and what about the renters? What options would they have to have that in the housing? Hello!?

Gail Livingston: Well, yes, I'm not sure I heard the whole question. I'll take a stab at. So the one question was if the property manager or owner is a smoker?

Sharon McAllister: Yes, what incentives do they have to have them pay the renter if they want that in their housing, what options do they have?

Gail Livingston: Yes so in Boston there's a smoke-free workplace policy at the housing authority so, we do have property managers who are smokers but for the last 10 years or more they haven't been able to smoke in their offices so they were outside smoking on the sidewalk as well, from their properties.

We do offer smoking cessation programs for our own employees as well.
Does that get at what you were talking about?

Sharon McAllister: Yes, I was just wondering because is it the policy that's mandatory for statewide or just compute. Like is it just in some states where it's just like?

Gail Livingston: Yes, those kind of rules definitely vary state to state. But here we have a city of Boston, maybe it's the state but we do have smoke-free workplace policy so.

Sharon McAllister: Oh okay.

Gail Livingston: That covers a big portion of our properties.

Sharon McAllister: Oh, okay, I guess it varies from state to state then.

Gail Livingston: Yes.

Kara Skahen: I would add that in Minnesota a lot of property managers even though, that I worked with that are smokers, are largely supportive of smoke-free policies because they see the damage, especially the property damage that can be caused by smoking indoors.

So a lot of times the talking points to those managers, especially if they are in a market rate building is going to be protecting your investment, the cost savings, reducing fire risk, potential insurance savings. All of these things very much resonate with property managers, even if they are smokers.

Sharon McAllister: Okay.

Joel London: And this is Joe London. I'll put another plug in for Kara's website because there are population specific, you know, messages and talking points and information for each of those audiences that you were talking about that you just asked about, so check out the website that Kara shared, www.minnesotasmoke-freehousing.org.

Dr. Dan Bader: All right, well this is has been some wonderful discussion. I know we didn't reach all the questions. If you still would like to submit your question, please submit it to ostltsfeedback@cdc.gov.

If you'll look quickly at slide 47 in your set, it talks about the Prevention Status Reports or PSRs. It highlights all 50 states and District of Columbia, the status of certain policies and practices designed to address 10 public health problems including tobacco use.

The PSRs pulled together their information about state policies and practices in a simple, easy to use format that decision makers can use to examine their state's status and identify areas for improvement. There's a link directly to the 2013 Tobacco Use PSR, on the February *Vital Signs* Town Hall Conference webpage or you can click on the link at the bottom of slide 47. Please let us know if you have any other feedback as well.

Again, ostltsfeedback@cdc.gov and we hope you'll join us for next month's town hall call on Tuesday, March 10 when we focus on trucker safety and seatbelt use. Thank you to all our presenters who attended the call. That is today's call. Goodbye everyone.

Coordinator: Thank you and this does conclude today's conference. All parties may disconnect.