

HUD Proposed Smoke-Free Rule
Talking Points
November 12, 2015

Housing and Public Health

- Housing and public health go hand-in-hand. Part of HUD's mission is to promote housing and create healthy communities.
- By reducing the public health risks associated with tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke, the proposed smoke-free rule will enhance the effectiveness of HUD's efforts to provide increased public health protection for residents of public housing.
- Compared to the general population and other low-income households, individuals in HUD-assisted housing have a higher rate of usage of emergency rooms and are more likely to have health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cigarette smoking kills 480,000 Americans each year, making it the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.
- Second hand smoke is one of the leading causes of asthma and other respiratory diseases for children — diseases that disproportionately affect families living in public housing.
- Asthma not only robs children of their breath but it's also one of the top reasons for why children miss school, robbing them of precious learning time. Asthma can also lead to expensive emergency room visits — a financial burden on parents already coping with the emotional toll of caring for their sick child.
- Exposure to second hand smoke can also cause sudden infant death syndrome and respiratory symptoms such as cough and wheeze, middle ear infections, and slowed lung growth and reduced lung function in children, and increased risk of stroke in adults.
- Since 2009, HUD has strongly encouraged Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to adopt smoke-free buildings. This past September we reached an important milestone: Over 612 Public Housing Authorities, representing more than 20 percent of HUD's portfolio, have voluntarily become smoke-free. That's up from 11 percent of public housing authorities that were smoke-free five years ago.
- By reducing the public health risks associated with tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke, the proposed smoke-free rule will enhance the effectiveness of HUD's efforts to provide increased public health protection for residents of public housing. These protections

will especially benefit the over 760,000 children under age 18 living in public housing and the over 329,000 persons over age 62.

- The Surgeon General has concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to second hand smoke, and that eliminating smoking in indoor spaces fully protects nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke. Separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposures of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke.

Cost Benefits of Proposed Smoke-Free Rule

- Smoking causes over 100,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 death and close to half a billion dollars in direct property damage; additionally, smoking is the lead cause of fire related deaths in multifamily buildings. Many PHAs that have voluntarily adopted smoke-free policies reported that they started the process after such a catastrophic fire.
- It is estimated that through the proposed smoke-free rule, PHAs will save an average of between \$16 million to \$38 million per year in property damage.
- A 2014 CDC study estimated that the annual cost savings associated with banning smoking in public and subsidized housing to be \$153 million. Health care costs accounted for \$94 million, and renovation and fire costs accounted for \$43 million and \$16 million, respectively.

Next Steps for Proposed Smoke-Free Rule

- The smoke-free rule proposes that no later than 18 months from the effective date of the final rule, each PHA must implement a policy prohibiting lit tobacco products in all living units, indoor common areas in public housing, and in PHA administrative office buildings.
- We need to hear from you! The proposed rule will be open for public comment for the next 60 days. Interested persons may submit comments electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. Comments may be submitted by mail to the Regulations Divisions, Office of General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW, Room 10276, Washington, DC 20410.