

10/20/10 – Research Results – these are the few responses we received when we asked PHAs if they had tried to implement a smoke free policy.

PEARSALL---We have tried this and encountered opposition by smoker tenants. They feel that what they do in their own apartment is their business, and you cannot convince them otherwise.

TEMPLE---We have thought about this but have not done it yet. We did just make a patio area at one of our high rises and have deemed that area smoke free. It is brand new so nothing to report.

TEXARKANA---We tried to do this at my last PHA. While we had a few board members for it, most of the residents were opposed. They actually came out in opposition. We also tried restricting it to only the outside, but that didn't go over either.

NEW BOSTON --- I wouldn't attempt to enforce this for the apartments. I just tell them that smoke will damage the paint and there will be an extra charge to get the paint back into good condition. I encourage them to all smoke outside. All of the common buildings and offices are smoke-free and when our maintenance do a turn-around, they don't smoke inside.

FLATONIA---Have had smoke-free housing since June 2009. Did notice smoke smell in unit once, but never did see evidence of smoking inside. We have designated areas for smoking. Has worked out great so far.

NEW BRAUNFELS---City has a no smoking ordinance in public places. We use that. None of our own.

PINELAND---I had only 1 major complainer, 1 mild complainer and 2 others that just wanted the exemption, but never complained directly to me. Other than that, everyone was very happy and supportive of the rule. I explained to the major complainer, who is on oxygen and smokes like a chimney, that if her doctor sent me a letter stating that it is detrimental to her health that she continue smoking and if the company that supplies her with oxygen said she could smoke around their equipment and wasn't liable for any explosions that might occur, then I would grant her immunity from the new rule. Well needless to say, I didn't hear from her again and I have had no other issues regarding this.

HUNTINGTON---The only resistance I had in attempting to implement a smoke free policy was from my board. They won't touch it until it becomes a federal mandate.

PLANO---We implemented the Smoke-Free Policy and did not receive any resistance from tenants. We introduced the new policy at our quarterly tenants meeting and each household signed an agreement that they received the documentation and announcement of the new policy.

SCHERTZ---We do have one as of September 2009. We had both resistance & support. But we invited all the Residents to get involved from the beginning & some helped come up with the final Policy/Rule to present to the Board. Be thorough, open-minded, give options that work for both sides of the issue, compromise where appropriate, stay calm & informed, listen & understand their perspective, offer smoking cessation assistance (some of our Residents quit smoking—but none asked for financial help), give lots of data & resources (websites, brochures, etc.), have special speakers (we had one from the American Lung Cancer Society), every focus meeting had agenda that we stuck to (not get side-tracked with other community issues), keep non-smoker alike, document all stages (sign-in sheets for all meetings), keep entire community informed of progress (newsletters/flyers/Board meetings, etc.), keep Board updated on progress.

First I did much research from several independent resources—inside & outside of the HUD arena, even the local fire department (they have data on danger of oxygen and smoking fire hazards). Got the Board involved & they gave me approval to proceed with the fact-gathering & having Focus Groups monthly to discuss all aspects of the policy & how it would impact current & future Residents. The entire process took us about 10 months. However, I had started gathering info about 2 years prior to the focus group stage. I kept the complaints & concerns from Residents and Staff in a tickler file previously. I finally advised each person to give me their concerns/complaints in writing from that point on so I would have some quantifiable data.

Using the complaints and the maintenance issues that were brought up from the smoking issue, I put together a comprehensive survey, published in the newsletter with a deadline date for responses, compiled the data, ran different analysis based on the data. Presented the data in our final Focus Group meeting (attended by smokers & non-smokers—both sides of the issue were represented). After all Residents had their say about the issue, all the attendees voted 100% that they would approve a policy/rule that would ban smoking in all common areas and inside the units; with smoking only allowed on the front or back porches effective 30 days from the approval date. Board approved it when the HUD notice came out that they "strongly encouraged" such a ban.

A good website is: www.smokefreeforme.org. It has one section specifically for Public Housing. A lot of good material. Hope this helped a little. It was a tough go; however, we have had numerous Residents express their gratitude for the

difficult process and implementation of the rule made to make their home environment more livable and enjoyable.