

Implementation of Local Smokefree Multi-Unit Housing Laws

More than [100 cities and counties](#) have enacted local laws that regulate smoking in multi-unit housing in order to create healthier living environments for residents by reducing secondhand smoke exposure. The first jurisdiction outside of California enacted a smokefree multi-unit housing law in 2025, and jurisdictions in other parts of the country are actively considering this policy option.

Jurisdictions that enact local smokefree housing laws may have varying implementation procedures, timelines (6+ months is preferable), and enforcement protocols based on their law's requirements, as well as the capacity, funding, priorities, and municipal and public health partnerships available. While these procedures may vary across jurisdictions, these recommendations can guide the planning process.

Goals for implementation are to create an organized process that educates all parties about the law's requirements and their responsibilities, and to foster good compliance with the law in a manner that reduces secondhand smoke exposure and supports, rather than punishes, residents.

Create educational materials

- **FAQ flyer:** A 2 page FAQ flyer/brochure can provide an overview of the law: types of properties it applies to (such as rental and owner occupied properties with 2+ units), types of smoking covered (tobacco, vaping, cannabis), and who it applies to (residents, staff, visitors, etc.), as well as a statement of why this smokefree change is important, date(s) the law goes into effect, how residents can file a complaint, overview of the enforcement process, locally available cessation resources, and clarification of common misconceptions (e.g., people don't have to quit smoking or move out of their building, but they do have to go outside to smoke).
- **Postcard mailer:** A postcard about the new law can be sent to all multi-unit property owners, managers, HOAs, and housing organizations, as well as multi-unit residents.
- **Sample notification letter:** A template letter can help property owners/managers notify their multi-unit residents about the new law and its requirements, and it can reference the FAQ.
- Translate educational materials into all locally needed languages.

Create webpage about the law

- Create a page on your city/county website and/or tobacco prevention program website where residents and housing providers can learn about the law.
- Include all the information from the FAQ flyer, including how residents can file a complaint, as well as a link to download the FAQ flyer, details about the enforcement process, link to the municipal code or ordinance language, the availability of signage, sample notification letter, and other resources you have available.

Signage for property owners

- Assess capacity to provide signage: Do city/county, tobacco prevention program, and/or public health/community-based partners have funding to purchase signage for housing providers?
- If funding allows, provide 2-3 sign options to produce and/or purchase. Metal sign for outdoor areas of property (entryways, gate, courtyard, etc.), plastic or paperboard sign for indoor areas (lobby, landings, other common areas), and window clings. Include a locally available cessation website and/or phone number on signs. Make signs available in locally needed languages.

Educate multi-unit housing providers

- Communicate with housing providers about the policy change and their responsibilities.

- Send postcard and/or email to all multi-unit housing property owners covered by the law.
- Highlight responsibilities of property owners/managers/HOAs, which may include notifying residents about law, posting signs, removing tobacco waste receptacles, and updating lease language.
- Promote the FAQ flyer, other educational materials, availability of signs, and cessation resources.
- Communicate with local/regional housing industry organizations (rental housing/apartment association, affordable housing developers, public housing authority, etc.) about policy change.
- Consider capacity of staff and/or community partners to visit properties to drop off educational materials and signs.
- Host an educational webinar or in person meeting for housing providers to learn about the new law, including their responsibilities, the enforcement process, and resources available to support them and their residents.

Educate multi-unit residents

- Communicate with residents about the policy change, how they and family members can follow the policy, how to file a complaint, what enforcement steps look like, and cessation resources.
 - Send letters, postcards, and/or distribute door hangers to all MUH addresses.
 - Host informational webinar(s) with health and community partners for residents. Have translator(s) available as needed.
 - Offer to host educational meetings for residents at local MUH properties.
- Connect with community-based organizations and local programs serving residents (lower-income housing, tenant groups, faith communities, ethnic health networks, health clinics, asthma program, school PTA/PTO, etc.)
 - Ask them to share information with residents they serve: Distribute FAQ flyer at upcoming events, share link to FAQ flyer and city webpage in their newsletter/blog/listserv, post about policy and cessation resources on social media channels, add health department to agenda at an upcoming meeting/event to discuss policy, etc.

Communicate policy change more broadly

- Use multiple communication channels to reach the community at large.
 - Run ad in local newspapers.
 - Post on social media channels.
 - Pitch article to local newspapers, radio stations, news blogs, neighborhood newsletters, other news/media outlets.
 - Post information (FAQ and/or postcard) at libraries and health clinics.
 - Table at community events (health fairs, farmers' markets, sporting events, etc.)

Plan for complaint and enforcement process

- Planning for implementation and enforcement roles and responsibilities should begin during the policy development process, involve all relevant staff, agencies, and partners, and be ongoing.
- Complaint steps and enforcement procedures will be informed by requirements in the new law as well as local capacity, resources, and partnerships.
 - Partners may include tobacco prevention staff, health department/board of health, code enforcement, environmental health, city attorney, city manager, and other city/county staff.

- Coordinate with staff and partners to plan process for responding to complaints, documenting reported violations, what counts as evidence, and following progressive enforcement steps.
- Create spreadsheet or another mechanism to track complaints and enforcement steps.
- Create template communications (education letter, warning letter, etc.) aligned with the local enforcement steps that can be sent upon receipt of complaints: overview of the policy, how you can comply, cessation resources, next steps and/or penalties if violations continue, etc.
 - Example: First complaint: send education letter with cessation information; Second complaint: send warning letter with cessation information; Third complaint: send warning letter and request meeting; Fourth complaint: pass complaint and violation history to code enforcement for graduated administrative fines.

Evaluate procedures and impact

- Over the first year the law is in effect, assess implementation materials, complaint process, and enforcement procedures to consider any needed changes.
- Assess complaints and enforcement results for impacts and areas of improvement.
- Ask community-based partners how they see the law working in the community.
- Consider surveying housing providers for their feedback and needs.
- Consider surveying residents about secondhand smoke exposure, support for policy, questions, and needs.
- Consider ways ordinance can be improved, such as removing exemptions, and communicate with city staff and advocates.

ANRF resources

[Health Equity and Enforcing Smokefree Multi-Unit Housing Laws](#)

[Tips for Housing Providers: Talking with Residents about Your Building's Smokefree Policy](#)

[Enforcement Tips for Property Owners and Managers](#)

[Model Smokefree Lease Addendum Language](#)

Partner resources

Public Health Law Center: [California Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Enforcement Guide](#)

Public Health Law Center: [National Smoke-Free Multiunit Housing Model Ordinance](#)

Public Health Law Center: [Firebaugh's Smoke-free Multi-Unit Housing Law: A Case Study](#)

Local examples

Alameda County, CA: [Smokefree MUH law](#) info including sample signs, FAQ, and complaint form

Del Norte County, CA: [flyer for residents about county's smokefree MUH law](#)

Carlsbad, CA: [Smokefree MUH law](#) info including signs, FAQ, and sample letters

More information is available from ANRF at no-smoke.org/at-risk-places/homes/

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