

Tobacco-Free Hospitals Toolkit

A Guide for Implementing Tobacco-Free Policies



West Virginia Hospitals: Moving Toward Tobacco-Free Campuses

West Virginia has one of the highest smoking rates in the nation. On average, 11 West Virginians die each day from smoking; tobacco use is the cause of more than one of every five deaths in the state. The U.S. Surgeon General's report, "The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke," shows indisputable scientific evidence that secondhand smoke causes premature death and serious disease in non-smokers. Secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard and there is no risk-free level of exposure.

Direct healthcare costs of smoking in West Virginia are currently estimated by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health at over \$1 billion per year. Tobacco use is the number one cause of all cancers and emphysema, and is a leading preventable cause of heart disease and stroke. Among pregnant women, tobacco use is a major contributor to low birth weight and premature delivery. West Virginia has the highest smoking rate among pregnant women in the country, 26.8 percent, which is more than double the U.S. rate of 10.2 percent.

Tobacco use in and around hospitals poses health and safety risks for patients, employees, and visitors, and results in a weaker workforce and lost productivity. Fortunately, tobacco-free facilities are becoming the norm. Of West Virginia's 55 counties, 54 have instituted some type of clean indoor air regulation, several of which establish restaurants, worksites, and bars as 100 percent smoke-free. Hospitals across the country are establishing tobacco-free campuses to save lives and money and to create healthier worksites, communities and states. Tobacco-free campuses protect and promote the health of staff, inpatients and outpatients, decrease smoking-related employee costs, strengthen the image of hospitals as healthcare leaders, and supports other tobacco-free initiatives within the community. While spit tobacco doesn't create a second-hand smoke danger, it does present an unhealthy image of hospitals.

The West Virginia Hospital Association (WVHA) is offering encouragement and support to its member hospitals and health systems to establish tobacco-free environment policies. The Association is working with members to assess current policies, identify needs, and share information, resources and technical assistance to forward this initiative. The WVHA encourages all West Virginia hospitals to work toward tobacco-free campuses.

