



Making It Work!

**Guidelines for Creating Effective
Smoke-Free School-Based Policies**



Making It Work!

Guidelines for Creating Effective Smoke-Free School-Based Policies

June, 2002

Nova Scotia School Smoking Prevention Coalition

Members:

Association for the Advancement of School Health Education

Canadian Cancer Society, Nova Scotia Division

Cancer Care Nova Scotia

Drug Dependency Services, Capital Health

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia

Medical Society of Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Department of Education

Nova Scotia Department of Health, Tobacco Control Unit

Public Health Services, Capital Health

The Nova Scotia School Smoking Prevention Coalition

The Nova Scotia School Smoking Prevention Coalition (NSSSPC) is a group of community agencies and government departments working together to help strengthen school smoking prevention in Nova Scotia. Members of the NSSSPC include

Association for the Advancement of School Health Education

Canadian Cancer Society, Nova Scotia Division

Cancer Care Nova Scotia

Drug Dependency Services, Capital Health

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia

Medical Society of Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Department of Education

Nova Scotia Department of Health, Tobacco Control Unit

Public Health Services, Capital Health

Acknowledgments

The information in this document is based on the most recent research available about youth tobacco use prevention. To make sure that the content reflects the Nova Scotia experience, the NSSSPC conducted focus groups and consultations with Nova Scotia students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

We gratefully acknowledge the input and assistance of

- Northern and Western Health Region students and school staff
- Eastern Shore Family of Schools
- Halifax Regional School Board
- Nova Scotia School Boards Association
- Teachers and administrators who reviewed and commented on draft versions of the document

We also wish to thank Karen Pyra, Janet Rhymes, and Susan Szpakowski whose writing and research supported the initiative.

The NSSSPC gratefully acknowledges funding from the Canadian Association for School Health Education, Health Canada, and the Nova Scotia Department of Health.

Table of Contents

The Nova Scotia School Smoking Prevention Coalition	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Purpose of This Handbook	2
Why Should We Be Concerned About Smoking At School?	3
School-Based Smoking Policies: What Does It Take To Make Them Work?	4
Why 100% Smoke-Free?	6
What About the Consequences for Policy Violations?	7
Recommended Policy Content	8
Ten Steps Towards Effective School-Based Smoking Policy	12
Resources	18
Endnotes	19

Purpose of This Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to guide you through the steps necessary to create or revise a smoke-free school-based policy. Schools have a very important role in smoking prevention for children and youth. As cornerstones of their communities, schools can

help to make sure that children and youth don't start smoking

help children and youth who smoke to stop smoking

help the community develop a culture that values a non-smoking environment

Many people in the school community have an interest in a smoke-free school-based policy, including teachers, administrators, staff, students, parents, municipal counselors, private landowners near the school, businesses, and local public health units. The input and commitment of all of these people are needed to create and implement an effective smoke-free school-based policy.

This handbook will guide you through the process of developing a realistic smoke-free school-based policy that meets the needs of all of the people associated with the school in your community.

The guidelines provided have been developed within the context of the *Nova Scotia Education Act* and the *Nova Scotia School Code of Conduct*.

Why Should We Be Concerned About Smoking At School?

Smoking is the number one preventable cause of death and illness in Canada. Every year 45,000 Canadians die from a tobacco-related illness. The next closest cause of preventable death is drunk driving at 4,000 deaths per year.¹

In Nova Scotia, tobacco kills 1,650 people every year. Two hundred non-smoking Nova Scotians die every year from cancer caused by exposure to second-hand smoke.²

In our province, the average age for smoking a first cigarette is 12.7 years of age.³ Many of these young smokers are taking the first steps towards a lifetime of addiction and tobacco-related health problems.

At today's youth smoking rates, more than 65,000 of the children and youth alive in Nova Scotia today will become regular smokers. Of these, 15,000 will die of smoking-related disease before they reach middle age, and another 15,000 will die prematurely due to smoking.⁴

We also know that smoking is a "gateway" activity. Youth who start smoking are at greater risk of using other drugs.⁵

In Nova Scotia, 25% of youth between the ages 15 and 19 smoke tobacco.⁶ Without great efforts on the part of schools, parents, communities, and governments, many of these young people will suffer unnecessary death and disability due to tobacco addiction.

Smoke-Free School-Based Policies: What Does It Take To Make Them Work?

Do Smoke-Free School-Based Policies Work?

A recent study looked at the effect of smoking restrictions in the home, school, and community on teenage smoking. The authors found that smoke-free school-based policies, when consistently enforced, are an essential part of creating community environments with lower youth smoking rates.⁷

Four studies have found that schools with consistently enforced smoke-free policies were more likely to have lower rates of student smoking.⁸ One of these studies from Wales involved over 62 schools and found a relationship between a strongly enforced, written smoke-free school-based policy and reduced student smoking rates.⁹

One California study found that schools that reported the lowest smoking rates were more likely to have a formal written and regularly enforced policy restricting smoking on or near the school grounds, a higher emphasis on prevention education, and a higher emphasis on cessation.¹⁰

Clearly, smoke-free school-based policies can help to reduce youth smoking rates. It is important to note, however, that to be most effective, smoke-free school-based policies need to be part of a broader school smoking prevention approach that also includes effective curriculum, support to help students stop smoking (smoking cessation), and education for teachers and parents.

Keys To Success

In addition to being part of a comprehensive tobacco prevention program, research has identified the following key factors associated with effective smoke-free school-based policies:

- The school and community must work together to develop the policy, including educating the school and community about the importance of tobacco-free schools.¹¹
- All people in the school environment must be targeted equally and consistently by the policy.¹²
- Diligent enforcement is a critical factor in the success of smoke-free school-based policies. Without enforcement, policies will not achieve the intended effects.¹³
- Providing cessation programs that help youth smokers stop smoking may be more important than using punitive sanctions for students who are caught smoking on school property.¹⁴
- An education program for student tobacco policy violators could be implemented as an alternative to suspensions.¹⁵
- Schools should express pride in being tobacco-free.¹⁶
- Teacher involvement and support is critical.¹⁷
- Smoke-free school-based policies, smoking prevention curricula, and cessation support are linked—all must be in place to have an impact on youth smoking rates.¹⁸

Why 100% Smoke-Free?

Given the known health effects of exposure to second-hand smoke, **the NSSSPC recommends that smoking by students, teachers, staff, or visitors should never be allowed inside any school building, facility, or vehicle.**

The reasons for prohibiting smoking on school grounds go beyond the issue of the hazards of second-hand smoke. Research shows that the social environment, especially smoking by peers, is a key factor influencing the start of smoking during adolescence. Most youth believe there is a high prevalence of smoking among peers and the general population. Youth experiment with smoking because they see others smoking and smoking appears “normal.” Any initiative that makes smoking less visible has a potential impact on future adolescent smoking.¹⁹

School policy that does not allow smoking on school property has the potential to positively influence students’ decisions not to start, or to continue, smoking. Some research suggests schools that do not allow any smoking on the property have lower student smoking rates.²⁰

Based on the research literature, **the NSSSPC recommends that a designated smoking area on school property should not be implemented at any school level (elementary, middle, junior, or senior high).**

What About the Consequences for Policy Violations?

Key Things to Consider Regarding Consequences Included in Your Policy

The next section of the handbook offers recommendations for the content of smoke-free school-based policies for elementary, junior high, and high schools, including suggestions for consequences of policy violations. Whatever options you choose to implement as consequences for violations of your smoke-free school-based policy, there are important points to keep in mind to ensure that your policy is effective:

- Violations of the policy must be taken seriously from the very first violation.
- Consequences for violating the policy must be implemented immediately.
- Consequences must be applied fairly and consistently.
- Consequences must be in accordance with the *Nova Scotia Code of Conduct*.
- The school must have sufficient resources to implement the consequences that are chosen. For example, if you choose an in-school suspension as a consequence, the school will need to have someone to supervise the suspension. If the school does not have the resources to implement the consequences outlined in the policy, the policy will be ineffective. Therefore, the consequences of policy violations must be feasible for the school to implement.

Recommended Policy Content

The NSSSPC offers the following recommended guidelines for schools that are developing or revising a smoke-free school-based policy. The guidelines are based upon the best available research and in accordance with the *Nova Scotia Education Act* and the *Nova Scotia School Code of Conduct*.

Elementary School

Policy:

Tobacco use will not be permitted on school property or at school events. Parents will be sent a copy of the school-based smoking policy at the beginning of each school year.

Suggested Consequences for Students Who Violate the Policy:

Although smoking-related offences do not happen very often in most elementary schools, it is important to consider such offenses initially as disruptive behaviours. If the violations are persistent, then the offenses should be considered severely disruptive behaviours. First-time offenses may provide a brief window of opportunity to work with a student before they become addicted to tobacco. School administrators must apply their School Discipline Policy with regards to consequences for non-compliance.

Suggestions:

- Have the student meet with a trusted adult at the school to discuss the issue.
- Immediately notify the parents of the student involved by telephone, with a follow-up meeting held between the student, the parent, and the administration.
- Assign lunch hour detentions where the student completes a personal reflection activity about smoking. Reflection activities can be accessed through the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Tobacco Control Unit website, at www.gov.ns.ca/health/tcu.
- Reserve more severe consequences for students who repeatedly violate the policy or display a defiant or contemptuous attitude regarding breaking the smoke-free school-based policy. We suggest that suspension be used only as a last resort at the discretion of the school administration.

Junior High School

Policy:

Tobacco use will not be permitted on school property or at school events. Parents will be sent a copy of the smoke-free school-based policy at the beginning of each school year. Support resources such as print materials and internet sites for youth smoking cessation assistance (See *Resources*: P. 18) will be available to all students, especially those who violate the smoke-free school-based policy.

Suggested Consequences for Students Who Violate the Policy:

It is important to consider such offenses initially as disruptive behaviours. If the violations are persistent then the offenses should be considered severely disruptive behaviours. First-time offenses may provide a brief window of opportunity to work with a student before they become addicted to tobacco. School administrators must apply their School Discipline Policy with regards to consequences for non-compliance.

Suggestions:

- Assign a series of lunch hour detentions or a full day in-school suspension.
- Immediately notify the parents of the student involved by telephone, with a follow-up meeting held between the student, the parent, and the administration.
- Assign a series of reflective activities for students to complete during detentions/ in-school suspensions. Reflection activities can be accessed through the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Tobacco Control Unit website, at www.gov.ns.ca/health/tcu. These activities provide students with a chance to learn more about the dangers of tobacco, how the tobacco industry targets youth, the monetary costs of smoking, and why they smoke.
- Refer students to smoking cessation resources and internet sites.
- Reserve more severe consequences for students who repeatedly violate the policy or display a defiant or contemptuous attitude regarding breaking the smoke-free school-based policy. We suggest that suspension be used only as a last resort at the discretion of the school administration.

High School

Policy:

Tobacco use will not be permitted on school property or at school events. Parents will be sent a copy of the smoke-free school-based policy at the beginning of each school year. Support for smoking cessation (peer-led programs, printed materials, and internet sites) will be available to all students, especially those who violate the smoke-free school-based policy.

Suggested Consequences for Students Who Violate the Policy:

It is important to consider such offenses initially as disruptive behaviours. If the violations are persistent then the offenses should be considered severely disruptive behaviours. First-time offenses may provide a brief window of opportunity to work with a student before they become addicted to tobacco. School administrators must apply their School Discipline Policy with regards to consequences for non-compliance.

Suggestions:

- Assign a series of lunch hour detentions or a full day in-school suspension.
- Immediately notify the parents of the student involved by telephone, with a follow-up meeting held between the student, the parent, and the administration.
- Assign a series of reflective activities for students to complete during detentions/ in-school suspensions. Reflection activities can be accessed through the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Tobacco Control Unit website, at www.gov.ns.ca/health/tcu. These activities provide students with a chance to learn more about the dangers of tobacco, how the tobacco industry targets youth, the monetary costs of smoking, and why they smoke.
- Refer students to a smoking cessation program.
- Reserve more severe consequences for students who repeatedly violate the policy or display a defiant or contemptuous attitude regarding breaking the smoke-free school-based policy. We suggest that suspension be used only as a last resort at the discretion of the school administration.

For All School Levels

Suggested Consequences for Staff and Visitors Who Violate the Policy:

One of the keys to implementing a successful smoke-free school-based policy is ensuring that the policy is applied fairly and consistently to everyone associated with the school. Therefore, **the NSSSPC recommends that smoke-free school-based policies specifically address consequences for teachers, staff, and visitors to the school in accordance with the *Nova Scotia School Code of Conduct*.**

Suggestions:

- Ask school visitors who violate the policy to refrain from smoking. If the visitor refuses to comply, ask the visitor to leave the premises.
- Ask visitors who regularly use the school for activities (e.g. community groups) who violate the policy to refrain from smoking. For a second offense, revoke the group's school-use privileges for violating the policy.
- Deal with teachers and staff who violate the smoke-free school-based policy according to collective agreements that may apply.

Ten Steps Toward Effective School-Based Smoking Policy

Step 1: Bring People Together

Begin by bringing people together to address the problem of tobacco use. You may need to form a new committee to develop the smoke-free school-based policy, or an existing group may be appropriate to take on this task. Designate someone as the group facilitator. This person will ensure that meetings are arranged and that the actual work required to write the policy is accomplished between meetings. At the first meeting, the facilitator will help the group clarify its purpose, time frame, and expected outcome.

Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community are all affected by a smoke-free school-based policy. Include people from each of these groups in the policy development process. Also, try to include both people who smoke and those who do not. That way, everyone's concerns will be heard, the policy and consequences can be implemented effectively, and all parties will share a commitment to making the policy work.

Step 2: Clarify the Purpose and Principles of the Policy

The facilitator should provide a copy of this handbook to all members of the group. When group members are familiar with the issues outlined in the handbook, they can work together to state the purpose of their smoke-free school-based policy. For example, the purpose of the policy might be "to help make the school environment healthy for everyone by eliminating exposure to the harmful effects of tobacco."

It is also important to state the principles on which the policy is based. Examples of principles include statements that acknowledge that

- tobacco use is harmful to the school community
- nicotine is addictive
- the policy is supportive of people trying to quit

- the policy is part of the schools' broader tobacco prevention program
- the policy will be applied fairly to everyone

It would be helpful to obtain a copy of your School Board's smoke-free policy if they have one. The policy you develop for your school must both meet the specific needs of your school and be consistent with the Boards' policy.

Step 3: Ensure that Prevention Resources and Strategies are in Place

Research has shown that smoke-free school-based policies are most effective when they are combined with an effective smoking prevention curriculum. The group should assess the schools' tobacco prevention efforts by answering the questions below:

Is the smoking prevention curriculum actually taught in every grade?

Does the curriculum help students develop assertiveness and problem-solving skills?

Does the curriculum help students recognize and resist peer influence to use tobacco?

Does the curriculum encourage students to critically analyze media messages that promote tobacco use?

Does the curriculum give students the opportunity to discuss the reasons why some young people need to smoke and to suggest less harmful ways of meeting these needs?

Does the curriculum provide information on the immediate and long-term consequences of all types of tobacco use including smoking, chewing tobacco, and using snuff, and on the effects of second-hand smoke?

Does the school have a mentorship program or other supports for students who are struggling with grades or with school in general? (Students who do not perform well academically are more likely to start smoking.)

Does the school support students through stressful transitions such as moving from elementary to junior high school?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no" or "somewhat," the group will need to identify the steps that are needed to make improvements in that area. Setting the right environment for the smoke-free school-based policy is critical to its success.

Step 4: Support Student and Staff Efforts to Quit

Programs that help smokers stop smoking are important supports to successful smoke-free school-based policies. If your school does not have adequate school-based supports for quitting, the group can work with community agencies to identify appropriate resources. Contact information for several community agencies is available in the *Resources* section of this handbook.

Step 5: Agree on the Content of the Policy

Clear guidelines help everyone in the school community to know what is expected of them and what they can expect of each other. A smoke-free school-based policy will state exactly where and when tobacco use is not allowed. Make it clear that the guidelines developed apply to everyone on school property—students, teachers, staff, and visitors—and to all types of tobacco use.

To be effective, a smoke-free school-based policy must include consequences as per the Nova Scotia School Code of Conduct for those who violate the established policy. Consequences must be developed that are appropriate and fair to everyone. There are several suggestions in the previous section of this handbook.

Step 6: Write the Policy in Clear, Easy-to-Understand Language

A clearly written policy provides everyone with a clear and common reference point. Copies of the draft smoke-free school-based policy should be shared with all members of the school community for feedback. The input from the school community will help to ensure that the policy is more widely accepted and that important issues have not been overlooked.

Following a deadline for feedback submissions, reconvene the group to finalize the smoke-free school-based policy. Once the final version of the policy is complete, have it endorsed by the School Advisory Council, sent to the School Board, and then distributed to all parents and students.

Below is a checklist for you to review your draft policy. Does your draft policy include

- a clearly stated purpose?
- reference to the School Code of Conduct?
- the principles on which the policy is based?
- statements about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour?
- statements about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour?
- statements about how the policy will be enforced?
- statements about the responsibility of students, teachers, parents, and administrators?
- how the policy will be communicated and who is responsible for this?
- the timeframe for policy review, who will review the policy, and who will initiate the policy review?

Step 7: Develop and Implement a Communication Strategy

Everyone in the school community needs to be informed about the written policy, when it will come into effect, and to whom they can direct any questions about the policy. All communication about the policy should be positive and should explain that the policy is part of the school's broader efforts to reduce the harms from tobacco. It is helpful to let everyone know that the policy was developed with input from smoking and non-smoking students, staff, and community members.

Members of the school community need to know the consequences of violating the policy. The communication strategy should also provide information about where students and staff can go if they need help dealing with smoking or other problems.

Ideas for communicating the smoke-free school-based policy:

- Introduce the policy at the beginning of each school year during initial meetings with students.

- Include the policy in student and staff handbooks.
- Include items about the policy in first-of-year letters to parents.
- Create a regular column in the newsletter about the schools' efforts to prevent tobacco use, and periodically place reminders about the smoke-free school-based policy in the newsletter.
- Include the consequences of policy violation in all space rental agreements.
- Post a copy of the policy for all members of the school community to read.
- Post "No Smoking" signs on all entrances to the school.

Step 8: Implement the Policy

From the date of implementation, the policy must be applied consistently to all students, staff members, parents, and visitors. It is critical that even first-time violations of the policy be dealt with diligently.

Step 9: Evaluate the Policy

The policy should contain statements about when it will be evaluated and by whom.

Questions to ask when the policy is reviewed include

- Are all members of the school community aware of the policy?
- Is the policy having the desired effect?
- How many violations of the policy have occurred and what were the circumstances? Are there opportunities to introduce additional programs or supports that might help reduce the number of policy violations?
- Are there problems or issues that the policy does not address?
- Are the guidelines in the policy still realistic?
- Does the policy need to be revised in response to new trends or concerns, or changes in behaviour?

- Evaluation of the policy should include the perspectives of the various members of the school community. Likewise, any revisions to the policy should be created with input of those who will be effected by the revisions. Regular evaluation will help to ensure that the policy remains relevant and effective for your school.

Step 10: Celebrate Your School's Smoke-Free Policy

Contact your local Public Health Services office, send in a copy of your school-based policy, and receive a "Smoke-Free School" certificate to post in your school.

Resources

Help with Smoking Prevention Curriculum

Smoke Free for Life is a tobacco prevention curriculum learning resource for grades primary to nine. The learning resource was developed by the Nova Scotia Department of Health and meets the criteria for effective school smoking prevention programming. Copies of the supplement can be ordered through the Nova Scotia Book Bureau.

Help with School-Based Stop Smoking Programs

Internet-Based Smoking Cessation Sites for Youth:

Sites can be accessed through the Nova Scotia Department of Health's Tobacco website at www.gov.ns.ca/health/tcu. Go to the site. Click on 'Schools' bar at the top of the page.

Group Peer-Led Smoking Cessation Program:

No More Butts! is a peer-led, group stop smoking program for high school-aged students. The program consists of 15 sessions (40 minutes each) scheduled over a period of 7 1/2 weeks. The program content and format are based on the social cognitive theory of behavioural change. It is participant-focused and uses the stages of change model. The program provides individual and peer group support as well as incentives to attract people to the program and acknowledge ongoing participation and effort.

No More Butts! is coordinated through District Public Health Services and Addiction Services who work with schools to provide the necessary resources and training to teachers and students to ensure successful program implementation.

Endnotes

- ¹ GPI Atlantic. 2000. The Cost Of Tobacco in Nova Scotia.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Martin MW, Levin S, Saunders R. (2000). The Association Between the Severity of Sanction Imposed for Violation of Tobacco Policy and High School Drop-out Rates. *Journal of School Health*; 70:8; p. 329.
- ⁶ Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, 2000.
- ⁷ Wakefield, Melanie A; Frank J. Chaloupka; Nancy J. Kaufman; C. Tracy Orleans; Diane C. Barker; Erin E. Ruel (2000). Effect of Restrictions on Smoking at Home, At School, and In Public Places on Teenage Smoking: Cross Sectional Study. *British Medical Journal* 321:333-337.
- ⁸ Charlton, Anne and David While (1994). Smoking Prevalence Among 16-19-year-olds Related to Staff and Student Smoking Policies in Sixth Forms and Further Education. *Health Education Journal* 53: 28-39,
and
Moore, Lawrence, Chris Roberts and Chris Tudor-Smith (2001). School Smoking Policies and Smoking Prevalence Among Adolescents: Multilevel Analysis of Cross-Sectional Data from Wales. *Tobacco Control* 10: 117-123,
and
Northrup, David A.; Mary Jane Ashley; Roberta Ferrence; Christine Klucha; Shelley Lothian; John Pollard; Darla Rhyne; Edward Adlaf; K. Stephen Brown; William Pickett (1996). The Ban on Smoking on School Property: Successes and Challenges. Executive Summary. Ontario Ministry of Health,
and
Peck, Diane DiGiacomo; Connie Acott; Patricia Richard; Susan Hill; Cathy Schuster (1993). The Colorado Tobacco-Free Schools and Communities Project. *Journal of School Health* 65(5): 214-217.
- ⁹ Moore, L. p. 124.
- ¹⁰ Pentz, Mary Ann; Bonnie R. Brannon; Ventura L. Charlin; Edith J. Barret; David P. MacKinnon, Brian R. Flay (1989). The Power of Policy: The Relationship of Smoking Policy to Adolescent Smoking. *American Journal of Public Health* 79(7): 857-862.
- ¹¹ Perry, Cheryl; Steven H. Kelder; David M. Murray; Knut-Inge Klepp (1992). Communitywide Smoking Prevention: Long Term Outcomes of the Minnesota Heart Health Program and the Class of 1989 Study. *American Journal of Public Health* 82(9): 1210-1216.
- ¹² Bowen, Deborah J., Susan Kinne; Mario Orlandi (1995) School Policy in COMMIT: A Promising Strategy to Reduce Smoking By Youth. *The Journal of School Health* 65(4): 140.
- ¹³ Wakefield, MA.
- ¹⁴ Pentz, MA.
- ¹⁵ Dupper, David R. and Lois A. Bosch (1996). Reasons for School Suspensions: An Examination of Data from One School District and Recommendations for Reducing Suspensions. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education* 2(2): 140-150.

¹⁶ Peck, D.

¹⁷ Distefan, Janet M.; Elizabeth A. Gilpin; John P. Pierce (2000). The Effectiveness of Tobacco Control in California Schools. *The Journal of School Health* 70(1): 28-30,

and

Pickett, William; David A. Northrup; Mary Jane Ashley (1999). Factors Influencing Implementation of the Legislated Smoking Ban on School Property in Ontario. *Preventive Medicine* 29: 157-164

¹⁸ Elder, John; Cheryl L. Perry; Elaine J. Stone; Carolyn C. Johnson; Minhua Yang; Elizabeth W. Edmundson; Mary H. Smyth; Todd Galati; Henry Feldman; Peter Cribb; Guy S. Parcel. Tobacco Use Measurement, Prediction and Intervention in Elementary Schools in Four States: The CATCH Study. *Preventive Medicine* 25: 486-494.

¹⁹ Health Canada. 1999. Youth and Tobacco: Lessons Learned from the Tobacco Demand Reduction Strategy.

²⁰ Moore, L. p. 123.