

# STOPPING TOBACCO USE IN KANSAS SCHOOLS



## The Problem

Although education about the dangers of tobacco use has increased in recent decades, youth smoking continues to be a grave problem in the United States and in Kansas. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10.2 percent of high school students in Kansas are smokers and 8.1 percent use smokeless tobacco.

## The Solution

Schools are in a unique position to reduce the problem of smoking and tobacco use by children. Research suggests that when consistently enforced, tobacco-free school policies are an essential part of lowering teen smoking rates. While Kansas law prohibits smoking and tobacco use in schools, as well as smoking within 10 feet of doorways and windows of schools, there is a need for stronger, more comprehensive school district policies.



Many Kansas school districts have adopted comprehensive tobacco-free policies which ban the use of tobacco products (including electronic cigarettes) on all school property (both indoor and outdoor areas), as well as at off-campus school functions. Many schools are also effectively educating students and staff about the dangers of tobacco use. However, there is more work to be done.

In the summer of 2016, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment conducted a scan of tobacco policies in the Kansas public school districts. Current information was received from 250 out of 286 districts and data collection is ongoing. Based on the initial scan, only 31.5% of school districts have tobacco-free policies. To be considered “tobacco-free,” a policy has to prohibit all forms of tobacco use by students, staff and visitors in school buildings, on school grounds and in school vehicles at all times. The analysis did not consider whether the policies prohibited tobacco at off-campus events, included e-cigarette usage, or referenced cessation services.

## Model Language

In order to promote a tobacco-free environment in primary and secondary schools throughout Kansas, the Public Health Law Center (“The Center”) recommends that school districts adopt a comprehensive policy that includes the following key components:

- A definition of tobacco products that includes current and future tobacco products;
- A prohibition on the use of tobacco products, tobacco-related devices, and electronic cigarettes on campus (inside or outside) and at off-campus, school-sponsored events; and
- A prohibition on any promotion of tobacco products.

To assist school districts in this effort, the Center has created a *Model Tobacco-Free Policy for Kansas Schools*. As with all policy drafting, this model is only to be used as a guide. Each school district should consider modifications that reflect local needs and situations. You should review your policy with an attorney or legal technical assistance provider to ensure internal consistency, especially if you change terms or delete provisions.

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This publication was prepared by the Tobacco Control Legal Consortium, a program of the Public Health Law Center at Mitchell Hamline School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and was made possible with funding from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

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