

Early Childhood Educator Guide to Creating Smoke-Free Environments

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PUBLIC HEALTH

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Early Childhood Educator

Guide to Creating Smoke-free Environments

This guide is designed to help you understand requirements for smoke-free environments and provide suggestions for creating a smoke-free policy at your facility. As you may know, exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful and can trigger asthma attacks; worsen respiratory tract infections, ear infections, pneumonia, and bronchitis; and increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in infants.

Colorado Standards

There are many layers of law that impact child care centers and family child care homes. How each law applies to your facility depends on the type of facility you operate, the funding you receive, and the children in your care. It's always best to check with your legal advisor to understand which regulations apply to your facility. In general, the following should be considered:

- All child care facilities must keep indoor spaces and 15 feet from the main entryway smoke-free, and vehicles used to transport children (Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act, [C.R.S. 25-14-201](#)).
- Use of tobacco and nicotine products in and around licensed child care facilities should be restricted, with some exceptions (General Rules for Child Care Facilities, [7.701](#)).
- Infants must be protected from secondhand smoke exposure (Administrative Guide: Rules Regulating Child Care Centers, [7.702](#)).

Additional Laws May Apply

If your center is associated with a school district, the Colorado Tobacco-Free Schools law may apply, which requires all public child care centers to have tobacco-free properties and vehicles (Colorado Tobacco-Free Schools, [C.R.S. 25-14-103.5](#)). There may be other relevant laws in the city and town where your facility is located, such as requiring a 25-foot smoke-free perimeter from all entryways. Check with your legal advisor to understand the laws that apply to your facility. More information is available at [BoulderCountyTobacco.org](#).

More You Can Do

Although there are already smoke-free protections in place in Colorado, implementing a written tobacco-free policy for your facility can help to assure that you're doing all that you can to protect the children in your care.

Suggested Policy Components

- Restrict smoking inside your family home or inside the child care facility at all times, ***including after hours or during events***.
- Restrict smoking on the property. Secondhand smoke outside is still secondhand smoke and can drift inside. Restricting smoking both inside and outside the facility adds more protection.
- Include all smokeless tobacco products, e-cigarettes, and marijuana in the restrictions. E-cigarettes contain liquid nicotine that can be poisonous or even fatal to children if ingested. Marijuana smoke contains many of the same harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke.
- Include requirements or guidelines for staff that do use tobacco products to reduce thirdhand smoke exposure. Thirdhand smoke is residual nicotine left behind on clothes, skin, and surfaces after smoking that can impact infants when they are held or when they grab clothes or hair and put it in their mouths. Suggested guidelines include:
 - Wearing additional clothing (e.g. hat, coat, smock) while smoking and removing the extra garments before returning to work.
 - Washing hands thoroughly before holding or handling children or belongings.
 - Locking up all personal tobacco products and keeping them out of children's reach.

The Boulder County Public Health Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) program provides education and technical assistance on issues related to tobacco and public health. TEPP does not provide legal representation or legal advice. This document should not be considered legal advice or a substitute for obtaining legal advice from an attorney who can represent you. We recommend consulting with your legal counsel before implementing any policy or procedure.

Sample Policy

Why We're Proud to Be Tobacco- and Marijuana-Free

Due to the known health risks of exposure to tobacco products and secondhand smoke and the health concerns associated with e-cigarettes and marijuana, it shall be the policy of (name of child care facility) to provide a tobacco- and marijuana-free environment for our children, parents, and staff. This policy covers the use of cigarettes, tobacco products including smokeless tobacco products and electronic smoking devices, and marijuana and applies to all employees, parents, volunteers, contractors, and vendors of (name of child care facility). U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved nicotine replacement therapies are exempt from this policy.

(Name of child care facility) staff and volunteers will serve as role models by not smoking cigarettes, or in any other way using tobacco or marijuana products in the presence of our facility's children, parents, or participants.

Our Policy:

1. There will be no cigarette, tobacco product, or marijuana use in any area of the child care facility or on its grounds (including playground and parking areas) at any time. Field trips, walks, and all other offsite activities and functions will also be free of cigarettes, tobacco products, and marijuana.
2. There will be no cigarette, tobacco product, or marijuana use in any (name of child care facility) owned or operated vehicle or private vehicle used for transporting children on (name of child care facility) activities.
3. All employees, parents, volunteers, contractors, and vendors will be notified about this policy, and signs will be posted on the property.
4. All employees, parents, volunteers, contractors, and vendors are asked to work together to support this policy.

This policy is effective as of (DATE).

Signed: _____
(Staff or volunteer signature)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
(Supervisor signature)

Date: _____

Adapted from ONE Step

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Communicating Your Policy

After you've adopted your policy, it's important that you communicate it widely by posting signs on the property, sending notices home to parents, and/or holding staff meetings.

Talking to your employees, parents, and visitors about their tobacco use can be a difficult conversation. Framing your conversations to be child-focused and describing your goal of providing the safest and healthiest environment possible for the children in your care can help to communicate the importance of your policy. Below are a few tips you can use when having these conversations.

Tip	Explanation	Sample Language or Ideas
Be child-focused	The health of the children is the number one motivating message you can share with parents. Make sure parents know that your concern for their child's health is your motivation.	<i>I've noticed that your child has been coughing and wheezing a lot lately. Breathing in cigarette smoke is known to increase breathing problems in children. Is your child ever exposed to secondhand smoke?</i>
Be a conversation starter	Asking questions is often a great way to approach the subject of secondhand smoke. Be sure not to place blame when asking questions, as these conversations are about the smoke and not the person who smokes.	<i>[Child's name] has been coughing a lot lately. Are they ever in situations where they could be breathing in secondhand smoke?</i> <i>What challenges do you think you might have in creating a smoke-free home?</i>
Be understanding	Quitting tobacco is not easy, and sometimes smoking off property isn't either. Remember, you're not requiring people to quit; you're asking that they not use tobacco products while on your property.	<i>I know quitting is really hard, and you may not be ready to quit right now. This policy doesn't require that you quit smoking, but in order to provide a healthy environment for everyone, we're asking that our property be tobacco-free. Thank you for not smoking here.</i>
Be helpful	Help employees and parents come up with ideas that will help reduce the children's exposure to secondhand and thirdhand smoke.	<i>Children can still be exposed to smoke left behind on clothes and in hair. Please remove your jacket, and wash your hands when returning from your smoke break.</i>
Be an educator	Have one-on-one conversations, and provide resources for parents and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have Colorado Quitline brochures available for those who are interested. • Host parent education classes at your child care facility. • Post tobacco-free signs on your property to communicate your policy.

Adapted from ONE Step

Sample Signage

Signage is an important part of communicating your policy. TEPP can provide you with customizable sign templates to be used on your property. For more information or to request sign templates, call 303.413.7567 or send an email to: healthinfo@BoulderCounty.org.



More Information and Support

The Boulder County Public Health Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) is available to provide support and guidance in implementing a policy. Call us at 303.413.7567 or send us an email to healthinfo@bouldercounty.org.

More information for child care facilities about tobacco, secondhand smoke, and smoke-free environments is also available from the following organizations.

Topic	Website
Tobacco use and secondhand smoke: Colorado laws and information	www.TobaccoFreeCO.org
Health effects of secondhand smoke	www.BoulderCountyTobacco.org http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/index.htm/ click on "Basic Information"
ONE Step: American Lung Association of Colorado	http://www.lung.org/associations/states/colorado/
Quit smoking	www.COQuitline.org www.smokefree.gov
Marijuana	www.MarijuanaHealthImpacts.org www.GoodToKnowColorado.com/
E-cigarettes	http://StillBlowingSmoke.org/ http://www2.aap.org/richmondcenter/ENDS.html
Thirdhand smoke	http://www.no-smoke.org/learnmore.php?id=671