

School Policy Communication Checklist

Implementing 100% tobacco-free schools policy is challenging, and without effective communication, it can be hard to ensure compliance. To help in this effort, we have provided a range of communication ideas and strategies to make certain that all members of the school and community – students, staff and visitors – are aware of the new tobacco-free policy, understand the rationale behind it, and are clear on the consequences if the policy is violated. In all of the strategies listed below, one thing should remain consistent: Communication of the policy should be **positive** and not punitive and emphasize that a tobacco-free policy is in everyone’s best interest.

A good idea is to form a Tobacco-Free Schools committee with broad representation from the school system to act as an advisory group for policy compliance issues. Although all of the strategies below *could* be implemented in your schools, some may not be appropriate in every area. We encourage you to work with members of your school and community to identify the most effective strategies for your school district.

Checklist for communicating with students:



What to Do	How to Do it	Done?
Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, athletic facilities, bathrooms, and in school and activity buses.	A school district representative can order free TFS signs, as provided by the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund.	
Place TFS policy details in student handbooks and new student orientation guides.	Use resources on this website, such as the FAQs , Why We Need TFS and model policy for language to put into handbooks and orientation guides.	
Review and discuss TFS policy at student orientation meetings, including meetings with new and transfer students.	The Why We Need TFS, FAQs and Resources on How to Quit can be helpful in meetings with students.	
Spread positive information about TFS through student organizations, activities and newspapers.	Use the success stories for ideas on how to write articles that focus on TFS. Encourage students to interview each other and school staff about the change for stories.	
Make announcements during morning broadcasts at school and over loudspeaker systems at school events.	Use the Tackle Smoking scripts for school events. These can also be modified for morning announcements.	
Have students design posters, banners, and signs to communicate the new policy.	Use the information in Why We Need TFS for poster ideas.	
Tell students about opportunities for tobacco cessation support programs in the community and provide information about how students can access these programs.	Use the Resources on How to Quit and Policy Violation Consequences pages to support your efforts.	
Involve student groups or clubs to assist in communicating the policy — such as Teens Against Tobacco Use (T.A.T.U.) and Question Why (?Y).	Ask the local Safe and Drug Free Schools coordinator if your district has a T.A.T.U. group and visit the ?Y homepage at http://www.questionwhy.org/ .	
Encourage, support and empower students to appropriately approach other students and visitors who are violating the policy.	Use the information in What You Can Do for specific strategies to help students approach their peers about the policy.	
As funds allow, use creative tools/incentives to spread the word about the school system being tobacco-free and to spread a pro-health message (i.e. imprinted mouse pads in media center, small footballs with tobacco-free message thrown out at games, event cards announcing the policy, stickers etc.).	Involve youth groups that support the TFS message.	
Include information in student newspaper articles and on school websites.	Send students to this website for more information about the policy.	

Checklist for communicating with employees:



What to Do	How to Do it	Done?
<p>Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, athletic facilities, bathrooms and on school vehicles.</p> <p>Annually review signage placement to ensure that signs are prominently placed and in good order. Pay close attention to athletic facilities and fields. Be sure to provide signs to all new facilities as needed.</p>	<p>A school district representative can order free TFS signs, as provided by the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund.</p>	
<p>Provide every school district employee with a copy of the policy and a letter of explanation from the school board.</p>	<p>Ask the district central office for a copy of the policy and for the superintendent or school board member to write a letter to employees about the change.</p>	
<p>Include a copy of the policy in employee handbooks. Be sure that substitute teachers also receive policy information</p>	<p>Obtain a copy of the policy from the school board or school administrators.</p>	
<p>Discuss the policy at staff meetings and new staff orientation. Be clear that the policy includes all forms of tobacco. Specifically address use of spit or smokeless tobacco with coaching staff.</p>	<p>Use the Why We Need TFS, FAQs, Coaches and Spit Tobacco and Resources on How to Quit for discussions with new staff.</p>	
<p>Hold in-service training on tobacco-related school policies for <i>all</i> staff, including: teaching staff, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, food service workers and maintenance staff.</p>	<p>Use the Why We Need TFS, FAQs, Resources on How to Quit and What You Can Do pages for background materials.</p>	
<p>Post TFS information, along with a copy of the policy, in staff lounges or offices.</p>	<p>Obtain a copy of the policy from the school board or school administrators.</p>	
<p>Include information in staff newsletters and on the school website.</p>	<p>Use the success stories as a basis for ideas on newsletter items.</p>	
<p>Tell staff about opportunities for tobacco cessation support programs in the community. Promote the North Carolina Quitline. Consider providing quit kits in the first year of implementation.</p>	<p>Hand out copies of Resources on How to Quit to staff.</p>	
<p>Inform potential employees of the policy in all job interviews. Include a statement that the school district is tobacco-free on all job applications.</p>	<p>Include the Why We Need TFS document as well as Why Teachers and Staff should support 100% TFS in application materials.</p>	
<p>Involve respected and approachable school personnel in sharing messages with staff groups.</p>	<p>Ask staff members who support the 100% TFS to discuss the policy with their co-workers. Use What You Can Do for compliance issues.</p>	

Checklist for communicating with parents/guardians:

What to Do	How to Do it	Done?
Provide information at parent open houses throughout the school year.	Use the Why We Need TFS page and copies of the school policy for parent information.	
Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, and athletic facilities.	A school district representative can order free TFS signs, as provided by the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund.	
Send a letter to each parent or guardian that: 1) explains the policy change; 2) provides the health, academic and social reasons for the change; 3) outlines the consequences for violators; and 4) asks for their help in supporting compliance.	Use Why We Need TFS, What You Can Do and Policy Violation Consequences as a basis for the letter.	
Ask parents to sign student-school contracts that address the tobacco policy for participation in extra-and co-curricular activities.	Most school districts, even those that aren't 100% TFS, prevent students from smoking at school events. It's important to be sure the contract includes all tobacco use at all times, even if the student or parent is not on school grounds.	
Discuss the policy changes at PTA, PTO, or similar meetings.	Use the Why We Need TFS, FAQs, Resources on How to Quit and What You Can Do pages for background materials.	
<p>Include an article outlining the policy and implications of the policy in parent-oriented newsletters and school or community newspapers.</p> <p>Periodically run additional news articles during the year to remind the community and thank them for their compliance.</p>	Use the success stories on this website as a model.	
Announce the new policy at all athletic events, meetings, concerts and plays. Have students develop and/or deliver announcements.	Use the Tackle Smoking announcements as models for your message, or have students read them as written	
Send a letter home or call parents if a student violates the policy.	See Policy Violations and Consequences for other strategies for communicating student violations to parents.	

Checklist for communicating with public/community:

What to Do	How to Do it	Done?
Place an ad in the paper thanking the school board for their decision to make the school district 100% tobacco-free.	Consider having students and supportive school staff write the ad; focus on the positive health aspects of the district's new policy.	
Ask other community agencies such as Healthy Carolinians, ASSIST Coalitions, PTA's, PTO's and Asthma Coalitions to include an article about the new tobacco-free school policy in their newsletters. (Provide them with a short article, if necessary.)	Use the Why We Need TFS page and the success stories for ideas on how to write a newsletter article.	
<p>Post tobacco-free school signs at all entrances to school buildings, school grounds, parking lots, and athletic facilities. Other places to post signs include gathering places, restrooms, loading areas, and stairwells.</p> <p>Annually review sign placement to ensure that signs are prominently placed and in good condition. Pay close attention to athletic facilities and fields. Be sure to provide signs to all new facilities as needed.</p>	A school district representative can order free TFS signs, as provided by the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund. Supporters can help hang them when the signs arrive.	
Remove all ashtrays from school property, especially those outside the entrances to school buildings.	Organize volunteers from the community to remove the ashtrays.	
Announce the new policy at all athletic events, meetings, concerts and plays. Include announcements in event bulletins and in written event program guides.	Use the Tackle Smoking announcements as a model and customize them for your school and event.	
Train students, staff and community volunteers to politely ask community members to respect school policy. <i>Always avoid communicating in a way that sounds judgmental or that might create or escalate conflict.</i>	Use the What You Can Do to Promote Compliance page for strategies on how to approach TFS policy violators.	
Ask students, staff, and community volunteers to assist in distributing informational flyers regarding TFS policy at school events.	Encourage members of the school community to actively promote the policy, perhaps by organizing a competition for activities by grade or classroom	
Communicate TFS policy to all community groups that use school facilities and property during off hours (i.e. youth athletic associations, athletic booster clubs that are separate from the school, churches etc.).	Include TFS language in the use of school property contract that groups may sign.	
Communicate TFS policy to parent and business volunteers who assist in supervising youth during off-campus activities, including field trips, job shadowing or community service.	Provide volunteers with a copy of the TFS policy, the Why We Need TFS document and the Policy Violation Consequences — this will help them to more feel comfortable approaching students who violate the policy.	
Inform vendors who provide supplies, materials and services to the school about the TFS policy.	Use an official memo, face-to-face communications or include a clause in any written contract agreement. The Why We Need TFS and Policy Violation Consequences can help you draft language for these documents.	

(Adapted from School Tobacco Policies, Oregon Department of Human Services, 2002 and the N.C. Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch, nctobaccofreeschools.com)