

Smoke-Free Supportive Housing

Hospitality House: A Case Study



Hospitality House's office in Boone

Why Smoke-Free Indoors?

Hospitality House in Boone, N.C. provides emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for homeless or disabled individuals. All sites are smoke-free indoors, with designated outdoor smoking areas. The smoke-free policy has been in place for many years, because management wants to promote a healthy environment for residents, and because fires were a big concern in some older buildings.

Results

Lynne Mason, former Executive Director, says the smoke-free policy is rarely violated, even though she estimates 90 percent of clients smoke. Most residents start off in the emergency shelter, so they are accustomed to the policy when they move to permanent housing. "The desire to have a bed is greater than the desire to smoke indoors," she says. Mason also recognizes that many of their clients are going through stressful times in their lives and quitting smoking can be difficult, so having an appropriate place to smoke outdoors has helped prevent violations.

Smart Tips

"You need to be willing to enforce the policy," Mason says. Residents know that Hospitality House is serious about the smoke-free policy and are therefore less likely to violate it. Mason also thinks it is helpful to incorporate the policy into a general healthy living program. Hospitality House encourages walking and biking, provides healthy food from its garden, and connects clients to healthcare resources in order to promote a healthy lifestyle for residents. Smoke-free living is just one aspect of this approach.

Parting Words

Willingness to enforce a smoke-free policy, as well as adapting the policy to the difficult circumstances clients face, has contributed to Hospitality House keeping its property smoke-free indoors for so long. Establishing clear guidelines, enforcing violations, and promoting a healthy lifestyle also are vital to the policy's success.

How it Works

The policy is included in the guidelines for all programs.

- ⇒ In the emergency shelter, individuals who violate the policy must leave the program.
- ⇒ In transitional and permanent housing, residents who violate the policy receive a written warning. If they violate the policy again, they may be fined or their lease may not be renewed.

Visit the N.C. Smoke-Free Housing Website at www.smokefreehousingnc.com to learn more about other properties that have gone smoke-free.