

Smoke-Free Supportive Housing *Reinvestment in Communities of Gaston County, Inc.: A Case Study*



The Willows in Gastonia

Why Smoke-Free Indoors?

Reinvestment in Communities, Inc. of Gaston County (RIC) helps individuals and families improve their opportunities for safe, decent and affordable housing in Gaston, Lincoln and Cleveland counties in North Carolina. RIC strives to provide services that improve self-determination skills for their disabled residents. When management decided to adopt a smoke-free policy, they worried that the large number of smokers living in the properties might pose a challenge. However, they found the transition to smoke-free to be relatively seamless. Frequent communication and advanced notice to residents were keys their success.

How it Works

Six months before the smoke-free policy went into effect, managers held a resident meeting to explain the new policy, and they followed up with monthly reminders that the policy change was coming. They also met individually with all residents as they renewed their leases to explain the smoke-free policy and answer any remaining questions they had.

Managers also saw the importance of linking residents with resources to quit smoking, if residents desired to do so. As a critical step, managers worked with their local health department to connect residents with smoking cessation resources.

Results

Nancy Landerman, Housing Program Manager, says most residents have complied with the policy and few warnings have been given. "I am not a smoker," Landerman says, "so when I enter a unit for inspections now it is much better. We haven't had to change the filters as often either." She anticipates that it will reduce future turnaround costs and is pleased that cigarette butt litter has significantly decreased on the property. Furthermore, a number of residents have reduced their tobacco use or quit completely since the policy change went into effect.

Smart Tips

- ⇒ When implementing a policy for smoke-free multi-unit housing, it is important to be patient, be concerned and be a support to your residents.
- ⇒ Your local health department is an excellent resource for cessation for those who desire to quit.
- ⇒ QuitlineNC (1-800-QUIT-NOW) provides free personal coaches for those trying to quit using tobacco.

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

