

Enforce the Policy

Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing: Guidance for Property Owners and Managers

Use Your Past Experience

Smoke-free policies can be enforced similarly to other policies. Do you have a policy about pets? Number of occupants? Noise levels? Think about how you have enforced other policies in the past and repeat strategies that were successful. Look for policy violations during everyday inspections and maintenance work, and train maintenance staff to recognize signs of policy violations.

Empower Residents

Provide forms that residents can submit to the management if they notice neighbors violating the policy. You can find a sample complaint form on our website. Also encourage residents to inform their visitors of the smoke-free policy.

Be Consistent and Organized

It is important to enforce the policy consistently for all residents. Create a system for how you will respond to policy violations and stick to the system. You might start with a conversation with the resident and, if that does not work, issue some pre-determined number of written warnings before pursuing a lease termination as a last resort. Be sure to document all violations and your responses to them.

Continue Communicating the Policy to Residents

Continue to remind residents about the policy through smoke-free signage, blurbs in newsletters, and flyers on community bulletin boards. Ensure that the policy is clearly stated in the lease and communicated to new residents before move-in.

Be Prepared to Tell your Story in Court if Necessary

Lease terminations due to violations of smoking policies are rare and undesirable. However, if a resident refuses to comply with the smoke-free policy, this may be a necessary step. Be prepared to explain to a magistrate or judge the health and safety reasons why you implemented a smoke-free policy at the property. Share facts on the costs you incur when residents smoke in their units and how those costs impact your ability to run a sustainable business. Also tell the court if the resident's smoking in violation of the policy has had negative impacts on neighbors, particularly neighbors with fragile health.