



N.C. Smoke-Free/Tobacco-Free Government Buildings, Grounds and Parks

Randolph County, “The Heart of North Carolina,” passed a TobaccoFree Policy a year ago; its popularity is spreading

Summary

The heart of North Carolina is becoming a healthier community because the Randolph County Board of Health (BOH) and Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) adopted a tobacco-free policy last year. Randolph County’s success included planning, patience and persistence. The community rallied together to build support for the tobacco-free policy. Participation from the N.C. Zoo, municipalities, local public health departments, Randolph Community College, libraries and the County Wellness Director ensured a fair and strong policy was adopted.

Challenge

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States and North Carolina.

Cigarette smoking is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths (one in five), including more than 41,000 deaths resulting from secondhand smoke exposure, each year in the United States. The adult smoking rate for Randolph County in 2015 was 23.4%. North Carolina local governments have the authority to make some areas smoke-free and tobacco-free. The Randolph County Health Department wanted to decrease the number of residents affected by secondhand smoke by increasing the number of smoking/tobacco-free policies on government grounds.

Solution

Ashley Curtice, Region 6 Tobacco Control Manager, provided technical assistance to the Randolph County Health Department throughout the policy development process. It took champions from the N.C. Zoo, municipalities, local public health departments, Randolph Community College, libraries and the County Wellness Director to coordinate with, and educate, the Board of Health and Board of County Commissioners. Susan Hayes, Randolph Public Health Director, provided education on the topic to board members at many of their meetings. Citizens offered strong support for the proposed policy at a public hearing hosted by Randolph County.

Quote

"The change in the past year, especially on our county library system grounds and on courthouse grounds, has been amazing. . . We have heard nothing but positive feedback from the community since implementation in May 2019."

-Susan Hayes, Randolph County Health Director



Visit our website at www.RandolphCountyNC.gov

Results

After almost three years and with support from many champions, both the BOH and the BOCC unanimously adopted the policy. The policy makes the following tobacco-free: county buildings, including the library system; county vehicles and public transportation; and county grounds, parks and trails. Implementation was successful and now the Randolph County Health Department is assisting the municipalities as they adopt the same policy, starting with the town of Ramseur. After a year of the policy being in place, the Ramseur city council members developed and passed an ordinance based on the Randolph BOH Rule. They will begin implementation later in 2020.



Lessons Learned

- 1) Patience. It takes time to build support for policy change. Plan for the long haul.
- 2) There is strength in numbers. Work with all the local partners you can; you will need support from many organizations and communities.
- 3) Find your champions. Don't go public until you've identified high-level leadership who already support your work. They will bring others to the table as well.
- 4) Rely on your Tobacco Control Regional Manager. This person knows the steps involved in the process and can help you plan for success.

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To learn more about smoke-free policies in N.C., visit www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov.



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