

Rhode Island Model Tobacco-Free Schools Policy Language

Developed by the Rhode Island School Tobacco Prevention Coalition

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Rhode Island Department of Education
Rhode Island Department of Health
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January 2007

The Model Tobacco-Free Schools Policy Language is intended to provide a template and sample language for policymakers in Rhode Island school districts. Districts may choose to use various sections of this document as written or adapt the language to make it appropriate for local needs and circumstances. While it is not necessarily intended for adoption in its entirety by districts, all of the components of this document meet with national recommendations and guidelines. Together, these policy components would support a healthy, tobacco-free learning and work environment and the prevention of tobacco use by students, families, and school staff.

Acknowledgements: Parts of this model policy language have been adopted from the Center for Disease Prevention and Control's *Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction*; the National Association of State Boards of Education's *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide*; the Carolina Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch & North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's "A Model 100% Tobacco-Free School Policy for North Carolina School Districts"; and the Utah Tobacco Prevention & Control Program's *A School's Guide to Comprehensive Tobacco Control*.

Model Tobacco-Free Schools Policy Language

[NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT]

[Name of Town(s), RI]

TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOLS

Intent: The [Name of School District] is committed to protecting the health and welfare of students, employees and visitors from the known hazards of tobacco use and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). The [Name of School District] feels very strongly that it must promote and model healthy behaviors for the youth of [Name of Town(s)] and promote a healthy learning and working environment. To these ends, district leaders shall develop and implement a comprehensive tobacco prevention plan that includes:

- Tobacco prevention education;
- Establishment and enforcement of tobacco-free school environments;
- Clear communication about rules and consequences regarding tobacco;
- Appropriate counseling, cessation services and/or referrals;
- Prohibition of tobacco advertising and promotional items;
- Rejection of tobacco industry funding;
- Staff preparation;
- Coordination with community efforts to prevent tobacco use;
- Strategies to educate and involve family members in tobacco-use prevention program development and implementation; and
- Program evaluation.

Rationale: Research has shown that:

- Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States;
- Environmental tobacco smoke is classified as a Group A (known human) carcinogen by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Exposure to ETS presents a serious and substantial public health risk;
- Nicotine is highly addictive;
- Tobacco use usually begins during adolescence;
- The younger a person is when they start using tobacco, the more likely s/he is to become a heavy user as an adult;
- Tobacco use is often a gateway to use of alcohol and other drugs; and
- Tobacco use interferes with students' attendance and learning.

In addition, the School Committee has a legal authority and obligation to try to prevent tobacco use, pursuant to:

- Rhode Island General Laws Chapter 23-20.9 "Smoking Restrictions in Schools Act" (www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE23/23-20.9/INDEX.HTM); and
- RIGL Chapter 23-20.10 "Public Health and Workplace Safety Act" (www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE23/23-20.10/INDEX.HTM).

Tobacco prevention education: All students shall receive tobacco-use prevention education, as part of a comprehensive, sequential, culturally appropriate K-12 health education curriculum, aligned with the *Rhode Island Health Education Framework*. The tobacco-use prevention education shall:

- Be introduced in elementary school, intensified in middle/junior high school and reinforced in high school;
- Use evidence-based curricula and/or be based on theories and methods that have been shown to be effective;
- Teach about the short- and long-term physiologic, legal, social, economic and cosmetic consequences of tobacco use;
- Decrease the acceptability of tobacco use;
- Address the reasons why people might or might not use tobacco;
- Counteract student overestimates of how many of their peers use tobacco;
- Instruct how to find valid information and services related to tobacco;
- Teaches how to recognize and respond appropriately to social influences on tobacco use, including media, family, peers, and culture;
- Develop skills related to not using tobacco (e.g., communication, assertiveness, goal-setting, problem-solving, and decision-making skills);
- Cover other important issues, such as addiction, secondhand smoke, smokeless tobacco, substances in tobacco products, effects on athletic performance, effects on fetal development;
- Explain how students can support others who abstain from or want to quit using tobacco;
- Include school and community action to support a tobacco-free environment;
- Engage family members as partner's in students' education and promote discussions at home;
- Integrate tobacco-use prevention concepts into the instruction of the other subject areas, to the greatest extent possible;
- Be coordinated with the Great American Smokeout, Kick Butts Day or other events;
- Be closely coordinated with the other components of the school health program; and
- Be coordinated, to the extent possible, tobacco use prevention education in the community.

Tobacco use prohibited: The smoking or use of any substance or item which contains tobacco including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, or other smoking tobacco, or the use of snuff or smokeless tobacco or having in one's possession a lighted cigarette, cigar, pipe, or other substance or item containing tobacco is prohibited:

- 24 hours a day, 365 days a year;
- By any person or persons, including but not limited to students, administrators, school employees and faculty, contract or other workers on school property, and school visitors;
- On all school properties and school grounds, including but not limited to classroom buildings, administration buildings, other buildings regulated by the school district,

playgrounds, athletic facilities, athletic grounds, locker rooms, buses, other school vehicles, parking lots, and any other outside areas within twenty-five (25) feet of any school building; and

- At any school-sponsored event that takes place off campus.

In addition, any tobacco product found in the possession of a minor shall be confiscated and discarded.

Notice/Signage: The superintendent/principal/other shall notify students, families, education personnel, and school visitors of the tobacco-free policy in handbooks, newsletters, and by other efficient means.

As stated in RIGL Chapter 23-20.9 all school areas where tobacco product usage is prohibited shall be clearly marked with “nonsmoking area” signs with bold block lettering at least three inches (3”) high stating “Tobacco-Free School – Tobacco Use Prohibited.”

There shall be at least one “nonsmoking area” sign, in conformance with the above, at every building entrance and in other areas as designated by the governing body. (Signs as detailed above are provided, without charge, by the department of health.) Signs shall also be posted in every school bus, in every school vehicle, and on school grounds.

Enforcement and consequences: It is the responsibility of all students, employees, and visitors to enforce this policy through verbal admonition.

Students: Violation of this policy will result in any or all of the following disciplinary actions:

- **First offense** – Parental/Guardian notification within two days of violation by Principal (or designee) to be conducted by telephone or in person. Referral to Student Assistance Counselor, guidance counselor, school nurse, or other appropriate personnel for health information, counseling and referral.
- **Second offense** – Parental/Guardian conference within five days of violation by Principal (or designee) to be conducted in person. Referral to Student Assistance Counselor, guidance counselor, school nurse, or other appropriate personnel for health information, counseling and referral. Loss of privileges, such as parking or participation in athletic, social or other extracurricular activities. Referral to voluntary tobacco cessation program.
- **Third offense** – Parental/Guardian conference within five days of violation by Principal (or designee) to be conducted in person. Referral to Student Assistance Counselor, guidance counselor, school nurse, or other appropriate personnel for health information, counseling and referral. Loss of privileges, such as parking or participation in athletic, social and other extracurricular activities. In-school suspension, alternative to suspension

program with a tobacco education component, or enrollment in tobacco cessation program.

Additional violations should result in escalating consequences, with an emphasis on helping consequences that are appropriate to the violation and the individual student. Other possible disciplinary actions include required community service, substantial fines (for those students who can afford them), and referral to the police or juvenile hearing board.

Employees:

The School District/Superintendent is directed to develop procedures to provide uniform and consistent application of disciplinary action for staff who violate this policy, in accordance with District personnel disciplinary regulations or guidelines. Staff will be provided information about and/or access to tobacco cessation services.

Visitors:

Visitors who are observed smoking or using tobacco products will be informed about the Tobacco-Free Schools Policy and will be asked by anyone in the school to refrain from smoking or using tobacco products.

If the individual fails to comply with the request, his or her violation of policy shall be referred to the administrator for the area in which the violation occurred. The administrator will make a decision on further action, which may include a directive to leave the school property. In extreme cases of resistance or non-compliance, assistance may be sought from the police department. Repeated violations may result in a recommendation to the Superintendent of Schools to prohibit the individual from entering the school building or other school property for a specified period of time.

School District:

The School District acknowledges that it may be liable for civil penalties for violations of the “Smoking Restrictions in Schools Act” and the “Public Health and Workplace Safety Act,” as outlined in RIGL §23-20.9-8 and §23-20.10-10.

Cessation programs:

Information and resources relating to tobacco cessation shall be made available to students and staff in each building in the school district. The school nurse and counseling/psychological/social service providers shall identify and refer students with problems related to tobacco use. Tobacco cessation programs will be offered to students on a voluntary basis. Tobacco cessation programs will be offered to staff on a voluntary basis, directly, through an employee assistance program, or through the district’s health insurance plan.

Tobacco advertising & promotion: Tobacco promotional items, including clothing, bags, lighters, and other personal articles, are not permitted on school grounds, in school vehicles, or at school-sponsored events. Tobacco advertising is prohibited on school grounds, in all school-sponsored publications and at all school-sponsored events.

Tobacco industry funding: Endorsement, sponsorship, funding or goods will not be accepted from any tobacco company or tobacco industry-affiliated foundation for any school-related operations, programs or events.

Staff preparation: All staff will be informed about the policy and of their responsibilities pertaining to it. Staff responsible for tobacco-use prevention education shall be offered professional development opportunities that cover content knowledge, curriculum, instructional strategies, assessment, policy, data, and cessation. Staff responsible for counseling, cessation, referral and/or other school-based tobacco prevention programs will also receive necessary training to be able to deliver these services effectively. In addition, any student peer leaders who deliver or assist with tobacco-use prevention education programs will be trained well.

Community and family involvement:

Students, parents, families, and community members will be involved in developing and implementing school tobacco programs and policies. Programs and policies will be coordinated with media and community tobacco prevention efforts, to the greatest extent possible. In addition, student tobacco prevention education will engage family members. Families will also be provided with information about tobacco use prevention, community tobacco cessation resources, parent/child communication, and other relevant topics and tobacco-free homes and vehicles will be promoted.

Program evaluation: The tobacco prevention program shall be assessed at regular intervals to determine whether policies, policy enforcement, communication, education, staff training, cessation programs, and family involvement efforts are effective. Policies and programs shall be updated and revised, accordingly.

Implementation

The policy will go into effect on [Date policy will go into effect].