



**Wilder  
Research**



# **Impact of Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Policies**

*Prepared for Start Noticing*



**A P R I L   2 0 1 3**



# Impact of Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Policies

*Prepared for Start Noticing*

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# Introduction

Start Noticing is a coalition working to eliminate the harmful effects of tobacco use and exposure, especially among vulnerable youth, through community engagement, education, and policy implementation. In Fall 2011, Start Noticing contracted with Wilder to study issues and attitudes related to tobacco use practices and policies within income-based multi-unit housing and day care and foster care environments. Key informant interviews and surveys were conducted with income-based multi-unit housing owners/managers and day care and foster care providers. Surveys were also conducted with residents of income-based housing. Start Noticing used study results to inform its work engaging and educating its communities to promote smoke-free policies.

Since then, three of six income-based housing properties in Cottonwood County and Jackson County passed smoke-free policies. In Fall 2012, Start Noticing contracted with Wilder Research to learn more about the impact of these smoke-free policies. Start Noticing is also interested in learning what useful actions the organization can take to help more income-based housing properties pass smoke-free policies.

This report provides results of semi-structured key informant interviews conducted in January 2013 with income-based housing owners/managers. Results will inform Start Noticing's ongoing efforts to engage and educate its communities to promote smoke-free policies.

# Methods

Wilder Research developed key informant interview protocols in collaboration with Start Noticing staff and conducted phone interviews with a total of five income-based housing owner/managers in Cottonwood, Jackson, and Redwood Counties in January 2013. Along with key informant interview protocol development and data collection, Wilder Research entered, analyzed, and reported the data. Please refer to the Appendix for the key informant interview protocol.

## Properties' characteristics

Key informant interviews with income based multi-unit housing owners/managers were conducted in each County. Three of the five income-based housing owners/managers interviewed have passed smoke-free policies. Please see Tables 1-4 for more details.

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### 1. Properties by County (n=5)

	Cottonwood County	Jackson County	Redwood County
Properties	2	2	1

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### 2. Smoke-free policy status (n=5)

	Cottonwood	Jackson	Redwood
Yes, a smoke-free policy was passed by my building.	2	1	0
No, smoke-free policies have not been passed.	0	1	1

# Findings

Overall results show implementation of policies have encouraged and supported housing owners/managers in enforcing smoke-free environments, or provided reinforcement for many who were already smoke-free, and helped some individuals quit smoking. The following sections illustrate owners'/managers' experiences prior to implementation of smoke-free policies, the impact of smoke-free policies after implementation, challenges experienced enforcing smoke-free policies, and suggestions for how Start Noticing may improve their education, outreach, and policy efforts.

## *Prior to implementation of smoke-free policies*

Complaints about secondhand smoke prior to implementation of smoke-free policies appear to be common with income-based housing owners/managers, with three of the five owners/managers receiving complaints about secondhand smoke.

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### **3. Complaints about secondhand smoke before policies passed (n=5)**

	<b>Income-based housing owner/manager</b>
Received complaints about secondhand smoke	3
Did not receive complaints about secondhand smoke	2

One income-based housing owner/manager who has not passed smoke-free policies cites no complaints about secondhand smoke in their building. The other income-based housing owner/manager who has not passed smoke-free policies has received complaints:

They can smell smoke. [I] try to get people to smoke outside and try to get them to quit. Maybe try to find a new place to live if [it is a] continuous problem.  
– income-based housing owner/manager, smoking allowed, Jackson County

In response, income-based housing owners/managers who received complaints about secondhand smoke worked to pass smoke-free policies in their buildings. These income-based housing owners/managers describe their experiences:

They could smell it even through the next unit. [We] wrote up people who smoked in [the] hallway, tried to stop smoke [from] coming from [the] smoking apartment.  
– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Jackson County

[People] smoked in the hallway. Nonsmokers didn't like this. And the mess. Cigarettes out by the front door. Hundreds of butts. [We responded with] smoke-free policy. Ordered cigarette disposal containers. Got in touch with smoke-free people... meeting at a restaurant. [The] health department in Jackson coordinated and lead it.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Smoke coming through peoples' doors stinking up hallways... most families went outside to smoke anyway [smoking residents with families]. [We] worked with workers of a specific resident with mental health issues.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Two income-based housing owners/managers shared their concern with occupancy rates and administrative work prior to implementation of smoke free-policies:

Most people moving away. It didn't really happen, but some did move out.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Redoing all the leases. The administrative work. But it was very easy. Gave a year's notice. Easier than I thought. Nobody changed apartments or left.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Jackson County

Prior to implementation of smoke-free policies, income-based housing owners/managers looked forward to a healthier and cleaner environment, with easier building maintenance:

Healthier for children and for everyone. Cleaner. Maintenance would be easier.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Healthier for everybody. Cleaner. Some apartments, people have lived in them for twenty to twenty-five years and they smoked. It was awful. It costs four to five thousand dollars to redo.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Apartments would be easier to maintain. The smell would go away hopefully. We can advertise as smoke-free and be able to offer it. It feels safe. No smokers falling asleep with lit cigarettes

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Jackson County

## *Impact since implementation of smoke-free policies*

Income-based housing owners/managers report no strong challenges enforcing smoke-free policies, with only isolated cases that they handle on a case-to-case basis. Since passing smoke-free policies, income-based housing owners/managers report mixed reactions from residents, but it has been mostly positive:

Some vandalism, but that's normal anyway. One tried to break the smoke container where butts are put. Most residents like that it's cleaner on the parking lot or on the lawn. – income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

No reaction. They seemed fine with it. Less outside smoking. Some smoke in vehicles. Maybe some have quit. Some smokers said they were glad because it'd help them quit. More positive than negative reactions.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Not much reaction. Some notes of appreciation from tenants.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Jackson County

Income-based housing owners/managers report residents' attitudes toward smoking, secondhand smoke, and smoke-free policies are mixed, though some residents have quit smoking.

[I] don't know if anything has changed. Those who smoke still smoke, except for one who has quit. [They] only smoke outside. [I] caught one who does smoke inside. Told her not to do it and took disciplinary action. No change of opinion about smoking [from smoke-free policies]. With smokers, some care because of the children. Some don't. Nonsmokers are thrilled by less smoking. One is a mother with children. She was very worried about children. I have no insight on residents' feelings about policies.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Seventy-five percent of residents were fine with policies. Seem okay with it. Some butts on the ground closer than twenty-five feet – the regulation distance. Not seeing many going outside, but not smelled anything inside. Some have quit. There is a mixture. Some 'this is our house [and] we should be able to smoke.' Others are 'okay, it'll help me quit.' I don't know about smokers feelings about the policy. Nonsmokers – some liked it. Others didn't care at all.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Before, [we] did a survey. [Was] surprised by how apathetic and 'they can do what they want' attitude. The smoke was bothering some people, but not a majority. Nonsmokers don't like it at all. Some are okay with it. Smokers, I don't know, I think they're okay with it [secondhand smoke]. After smoke-free policies passed, people just want a place to live. They are not concerned with the policy.

– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Jackson County

## ***Suggestions for Start Noticing***

Two of the three income-based housing owners/managers who passed smoke-free policies report no need for additional information or actions from Start Noticing to help them enforce smoke-free policies. One mentioned additional literature, sample leases, and notice statements may be helpful. Thoughts from income-based housing owners/managers follow:

Don't know. I have a sign up inside and am planning on putting them up outside. I had all residents sign agreements of smoke-free policies and abide by it. If violated, it violates the lease agreement. No trouble so far.  
– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

I've gotten a lot of information already. Signs and classes were good. [Start Noticing] did everything they could do or tried, but no cooperation from tenants. I have no suggestions for more involvement from tenants.  
– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

Have an actual meeting with tenants and give them literature, have a kickoff for smoke-free policies, provide sample leases so fears are taken care of, provide a notice statement.  
– income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Jackson County

The two owners/managers interviewed who have not passed smoke-free policies report an interest in making the building smoke-free in the future:

I hate smoking. I hate butts on the ground. Some smokers are bound to go to other places. Maintenance costs are expensive. It'd be a healthier environment. Peoples' apartments would be healthier and cleaner. The tenants might be getting smoke through the vents and they don't even know it.  
– income-based housing owner/manager, allows smoking, Jackson County

Yes, because the environment would be healthier... I'm not really sure because we're a low-income property. We have elderly people who can't get outside too much. Afraid we'd lose residents.  
– income-based housing owner/manager, allows smoking, Redwood County

A new owner/manager to the area reported interest in connecting with Start Noticing on more information. Another is interested in materials that are easier to digest and directed specifically at residents:

I think [I need] a little bit of everything. Information on new products. New research on lung development, etcetera. Definitely building signage. I don't know if [Start Noticing] has the word out. Gone one call, but that's it. I have been acquainted with Start Noticing representatives at meetings. I need packets for tenants – current and new residents to explain policy and change their minds.

- Have Start Noticing come in person to talk.
- income-based housing owner/manager, allows smoking, Redwood County

I already have access to information through Start Noticing. I have no information directed to occupants. [Documents] are fifty plus pages. I need two to three page documents with large print, easy to read, short information summaries, specifically geared toward residents. I talked with residents, but they have no interest. How do you garner interest? Some tenants are too old. They can't move well and it's an effort to get outside [to smoke]. How do we address these issues? – income-based housing owner/manager, allows smoking, Jackson County

A property that has not passed smoke-free policies also expressed concerns about going smoke-free related to the fear of losing residents and whether it is “even legal to tell people they can't smoke in their apartment” (income-based housing owner/manager, allows smoking, Jackson County). The other respondent had no concerns and said “the majority, eighty or ninety percent, [of residents] would be fine with it so maybe [they] should do it. Everyone should outlaw smoking. Everyone's best interest, so why not do it?” (income-based housing owner/manager, allows smoking, Redwood County). Further, income-based housing owner/managers who have worked directly with Start Noticing praise their work together:

- It was very helpful to me. Informative. Gave me guidelines of how to enforce it. Paperwork was provided.
- income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

- It's a good program. If you want to quit smoking, they will definitely give you direction. It's your health.
- income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Cottonwood County

- Great organization. They answered any questions I could think of clearly.
- income-based housing owner/manager, smoke-free, Jackson County

# Appendix

## *Key informant interview protocol – Income-based housing owner/managers*

### **2012 Cottonwood, Jackson, Redwood County Tobacco Free Policies Impact – 71595 Key Informant Interviews with Income Based Housing Authorities**

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with Wilder Research. Start Noticing, a coalition working in Cottonwood, Jackson, and Redwood counties to educate the community about the effects of tobacco and to address tobacco issues in our community, contracted with Wilder to learn more about what impact smoke-free policies have had since policies were passed by Multi-unit housing or apartment Property owners or managers. We are interested in hearing about your experiences with this topic and your feelings about it. All your answers are completely confidential. The interview should take about fifteen to twenty minutes, depending on how much you have to say. The results will be used by Start Noticing to plan ongoing efforts to work with you and others in the community. Is now a good time to do the interview?

**IF NO** – When would be a better time to complete the interview? (**AS NEEDED:** We're wrapping up the interviewing for this study by the end of January, so we'd like to set up a time before then.)

**IF YES** – Great! As I mentioned earlier, everything you tell me in this interview is confidential. The results of your interview will be compiled and used by Wilder Research and Start Noticing to make recommendations in a report, which will be completed later this winter.

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#### **Message Script**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from Wilder Research in Saint Paul. You have been identified as someone who can help us learn more about how smoke free policies have impacted your community. We would like to interview you as part of a study we are conducting for Start Noticing, a coalition working in Cottonwood, Jackson, and Redwood counties to educate the community about the effects of tobacco and to address tobacco issues in the community. Please call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ to schedule an appointment to do the interview. We really appreciate your help. Thank you!

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1. Have smoke free policies been passed in your building?

☐<sup>1</sup> Yes, a smoke free policy was passed by my building.

☐<sup>2</sup> No, smoke free policies have not been passed. (**SKIP TO QUESTION #3**)

2. Before smoke-free policies passed, did you ever receive complaints about secondhand tobacco smoke?

☐<sup>1</sup> Yes → → 3b. What were the complaints? \_\_\_\_\_

3c. How did you respond to concerns? (**SKIP TO QUESTION #4**) \_\_\_\_\_

☐<sup>2</sup> No (**SKIP TO QUESTION #4**)

3. Do you ever receive complaints about secondhand tobacco smoke?

☐<sup>1</sup> Yes → → 3b. What are the complaints? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3c. How did you respond to concerns? (**SKIP TO QUESTION #12**) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

☐<sup>2</sup> No (**SKIP TO QUESTION #12**)

4. "Thirdhand smoke" is residual tobacco smoke contamination, the chemical particles and toxins that linger on clothes, hair, upholstery, drapes, carpets, etc., long after the smoke has been cleared from the air. Prior to this interview, did you know about "thirdhand smoke"?

☐<sup>1</sup> Yes → → 4b. How did you know about "thirdhand smoke"? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

☐<sup>2</sup> No

5. Tell me about your residents' smoking activity and opinions about tobacco use before the policies passed. How have the smoke free policies affected their smoking activity and opinions about tobacco use?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. How do you think your smoking residents feel about secondhand tobacco smoke? What about your non-smoking residents? How have the smoke free policies affected their feelings?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. How have residents reacted since the building has gone smoke-free? (**Probe:** Have they been resistant? Supportive?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What were your concerns, if any, about going smoke-free? (**Probe:** Now that smoke-free policies have passed, are these concerns a reality? How have you addressed these concerns? Has there been an impact on occupancy rates?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. What did you think would be potential benefits in going smoke-free? (**Probe:** Now that smoke-free policies have passed, are you seeing these benefits? Why or why not? Has there been an impact on people's health? Lower property damage or turnover costs?)

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10. What kind of additional information do you think would be the most useful in enforcing smoke-free policies? (**Probe:** Anything else?)

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11. What are the most useful actions Start Noticing can take in helping you enforce smoke-free policies? (**Probe:** Anything else?) (**SKIP TO QUESTION #19**)

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12. Are you interested in making the building smoke-free?

☐<sup>1</sup> Yes → → 12b. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

☐<sup>2</sup> No → → 12c. Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

13. **IF YES TO Q.12:** What kind of information do you think would be the most useful in making the decision to become smoke-free or going through the process of becoming smoke-free?

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14. **IF YES TO Q.12:** What are the most useful actions Start Noticing can take in helping your building become smoke-free? (**PROBE:** Building signage? Information for new tenants?)

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15. What are the potential concerns in going smoke-free?

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16. What are the potential benefits in going smoke-free?

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17. How do you think residents would react if you decided to make the building smoke-free? (**PROBE:** Do you think they would be resistant? Supportive?)

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18. Has Start Noticing's efforts to help your business with smoke-free policies been useful so far? What was the most useful for you? (**Probe:** Providing more information about the topic? Letter of support? Signage for residence? Signage for the road? Help answering questions about policies?)

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19. What would you tell others like you about working together with Start Noticing?

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**Well, those are all my questions. Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with us today! We really appreciate your help!**