

## Policy Tip Sheet – Designated Smoking Areas

Several campuses have sought to create designated smoking areas as a “compromise” with smokers. BACCHUS does not endorse this concept, and we encourage campuses to at least make the argument against them.

### A few comments on designated smoking areas...

Many schools see smoking areas as a compromise and a show of respect for smokers. In reality, it may set you back further than if you try for a tobacco-free policy now. Here’s why:

- The campus will need to invest money in shelters, landscaping, etc. This will make officials reluctant to remove the shelters if the campus becomes tobacco-free.
  - Communities that allowed restaurants and bars to purchase expensive (ineffective) filtering systems instead of becoming smoke free ultimately had a more difficult time passing smoke-free ordinances. Businesses were upset that they already invested in expensive technology, thinking it was sufficient.
- Some locations that have installed shelters report smokers stop using the shelters over time because of the horrible smell and grime that build up. The shelters are something else for facilities management to clean. Are they willing to do that on a consistent basis?
- Providing smoking areas or shelters is inconsistent with health messages. A smoking area says, “We care about non-smokers’ health, but not smokers’.” Smokers are even more at risk because they inhale the first-hand smoke, but also the secondhand smoke of those around them. The implied message, “Go ahead, hurt yourself” is not acceptable for higher education or in the health field. You are trying to protect the health of everyone, not just non-smokers.
- Smoking areas alter the perception of what is “normal” behavior on campus. Even though there may only be the same set of people in the smoking area, passers-by will come away with the impression that smoking prevalence is higher than it truly is.

### Regarding “Compromises”

Two things to consider when looking at suggested “compromises”

- Will the revised policy try to give the appearance of being tobacco-free when it truly is not? This ruins the policy’s credibility.
- If you pass this policy, will it impede further progress in trying to make the policy stronger?

Remember that you are passing a living document—something that will continue to have life and will evolve over the years. Your job, of course, is to help ensure that the document reflects the tobacco-free norms that develop and for which you strive.

Also keep in mind that future tobacco control funding may be limited. Will you have the resources to pass a “better” policy later?