

Sample Agenda and Discussion Questions for Listening Session: Tobacco-Free Policy Change

Purpose:

The purpose of a listening session is to provide a structured discussion where staff OR clients can voice their opinions about a new tobacco-free organizational policy being implemented where they provide or receive services. Be prepared for discussions to last between 30-60 minutes.

Tips for conducting listening sessions include:

- **Hold staff and client listening sessions separately. Take the time to get staff on board first.**
- Have a planning meeting or call ahead of time with the facilitators to prepare for the meeting and discuss roles
- Gather and tailor cessation and educational resources for staff or clients (ex: information on secondhand smoke or vape, benefits of quitting for mental and physical health, understand the tobacco use treatment benefits offered by health insurance to staff, have QuitlineNC materials, Pathways to Freedom, Become an Ex etc.).
- Set ground rules for the session to keep the discussion orderly and ensure that everyone who wants to express their opinion is heard. Suggested ground rules include:
 - Be respectful of others' opinions
 - Please speak one at a time so that we can hear what everyone has to say
 - In a virtual setting utilize the "raise hand" tools so that one person is speaking, and everyone can hear
- Facilitation by a person outside of the immediate organization may be helpful (your tobacco control regional or county staff can support this)
- If possible, have two public health facilitators attend the listening session:
 - One facilitator, who is not part of the immediate organization, to guide the discussion and be a listener to program participant opinions
 - A co-facilitator can distribute materials, ensure ground rules are being followed, and write down anything that will need follow-up
- If leadership is still writing the final policy, staff can explain that they are exploring implementing a tobacco-free policy. If the program already has a policy written that they are going to implement, advise **staff** to clearly review the new policy. Advise staff to also talk about how adherence to the policy will be promoted among residents and staff.
- The facilitator can then **educate** participants by giving a background of the risks of secondhand and thirdhand smoke and fire at the program, as well as the importance of offering tobacco use treatment and how becoming tobacco free benefits mental health and substance use recovery. Do not focus on cost benefits for healthcare agencies.

- The facilitator should also give an overview of cessation resources available for those who want to quit. It is not necessary for clients or staff to quit, only that they adhere to the policy while on the agency's campus. Promote cessation resources like QuitlineNC or programming you have at your agency. For staff listening sessions promote the tobacco use treatment benefits that are offered by the agency's health plan.
- **Ask** staff or clients how they feel about the new policy; **Listen** to concerns; **Empathize** with their situations.
- Do get in your talking points about the health benefits of tobacco-free policies at the beginning of the discussion. However, do not feel the need to "correct" people's views as they express them. You want to let them express their opinion without going "tit for tat" and arguing with them.
 - Ask permission before sharing any additional information tailored to staff or client concerns, the purpose of a listening session is to listen. You may even come back and have a training or another session that includes the relevant information at a different time.
- Leave time for a question-and-answer period between the leadership and staff or clients at the end of the session.
- Offer to follow up with staff or clients about whether they need more cessation resources.

Note to facilitators:

- **Use reflective listening, make sure you understood staff or client's statements and empathize.**
 - A staff member skilled in motivational interviewing would be a useful facilitator for a listening session.

Motivational Interviewing Techniques

- **Express empathy**
 - "Many people worry about that same thing."
- **Develop discrepancy**
 - "I hear you saying that smoking is making it hard for you to breathe, and you care about your health."
- **Roll with resistance**
 - "I get it. You are worried about losing your smoking buddies."
 - "Sounds like you're not sure if you're ready."
- **Support self-efficacy**
 - "So you had some success the last time you tried to quit. What worked for you?"
 - Offer options (classes, counseling, NRT) & ask the person for his/her ideas

Roles and Responsibilities:

Facilitator Role:	Co-Facilitator Role:	Site Manager Role:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct introductions & state the purpose of the session• Describe the “Listening Session” process<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Will ask questions to listen to clients’ concerns▪ Want everybody to contribute ideas• State the ground rules (see page 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep track of time• Help facilitator enforce ground rules• Help facilitator moderate the emotional pitch of the meeting• Jot down items that come up in discussion that need follow-up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and explain the new policy and make sure everyone understands• Field questions from residents about the policy change and how it will be enforced• Reassure clients they won’t have to leave the program if they abide by the policy

Sample Outline and Questions (60 minutes)

I. Introductions (Everyone, 5 minutes)

- Try an icebreaker, like sharing your name (if staff your role), and what do you do for fun?

II. Purpose (25 minutes) - The purpose of this listening session is to provide everyone with a space for discussion about the proposed tobacco-free policy, which is required by NC managed care organizations. We want to share some of the effects of tobacco use on mental health, information on resources available to help people quit, and the facts about health effects of smoking and secondhand smoke. Most importantly we want to hear from you about your opinions on what this new policy means to you.

Potential discussion questions:

- What does the new policy mean to you?
- Have you ever tried to quit smoking or using tobacco? What were some of the things that were helpful? What were some of the things that made it hard to quit?
 - **Note to facilitators: This question often leads clients or staff to make their own case for a tobacco-free policy, through sharing their personal experiences. Constant triggers to smoke in your environment make it hard to quit.**
- What is good about tobacco use on campus?
 - **Note to facilitators: Yes, tobacco use on campus is dangerous. However, clients or staff may have reasons they like it. Discovering those gives you an idea of how you can help with the transition. For example: collaborate on**

finding healthy ways for people to relax and socialize on campus. You may also find that staff and clients do not identify any benefits to tobacco use on campus.

- What isn't good about tobacco use on campus?

III. Benefits of Tobacco-Free Policies (10 minutes)

Potential discussion questions:

- Do you think there will be any good things about our program going tobacco free? If so, what are they? Probe:
 - For those concerned about or having problems with exposure to SHS, how do you think the policy will be helpful?
 - For those interested in quitting, how would the policy be helpful?

IV. Quitting Tobacco Use (15 minutes) - There are resources to help people who want to quit. Be prepared to answer questions about electronic cigarettes and share facts that they cannot be considered safe.

Potential discussion questions:

- Do you have concerns about not having tobacco use on campus? If so, what are they? Probes:
 - For those who want to quit smoking, are you concerned about how you will quit?
 - Ask if they would like to hear about some ways that can address those concerns if they want to quit
 1. Discuss effects of quitting (use visual aids, discuss benefits for mental health, SUD recovery, and physical health)
 2. QuitlineNC
 3. Discuss any other local or agency quit tobacco use resources available
- What support can be given to people who currently smoke and want to quit?
 - Would groups, using QuitlineNC, or individual counseling help?
 - Would medications like nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) help?
 - Other things that would help such as other ways to socialize or things to do with your hands/mouth (ex: toothpicks)
- With this change coming, what are some things the organization can do to make it easier and a smooth transition for everyone?
- Ask about how to promote adherence: What do clients and staff need to be successful with the new policy in place?

V. Communication and Implementation (5 minutes)

Potential discussion questions:

- How can we let people know about the tobacco-free policy and educate other clients, staff, or visitors?
Probe:
 - Where do we need to post signs?
 - Would you be willing to share what you learned with others?

- How can we repurpose smoking areas (if applicable) to support client goals and needs?
- For staff: what kind of training, information, or other support do you need to be successful promoting adherence to the policy and offering treatment?