

Backgrounder: Tobacco and Smoke-Free Environments (TSFE) Policy

The Tobacco Reduction Act and the Tobacco and Smoke Free Environments Policy

[Alberta's Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act](#) (TRA) protects people from exposure to cigarette smoke by prohibiting smoking within five meters (16 feet) of a doorway, open window or air intake in a public place or workplace, including work vehicles.

The Alberta Health Services (AHS) [Tobacco and Smoke Free Environments \(TSFE\) policy](#) builds on the TRA by prohibiting tobacco and tobacco-like consumption on AHS property. The policy came into effect April 1, 2011, and prohibits tobacco consumption in or on all grounds, facilities, property or vehicles in an area owned, operated, leased or funded by AHS. Property includes parking areas, vehicles parked in parking lots, and sidewalks on site. The policy applies to all agencies/facilities that receive 50 per cent or more of their funding from AHS. The policy outlines the commitment to a smoke and tobacco-free environment while ensuring the wellbeing of patients/clients who consume tobacco products.

Environments that restrict or prohibit smoking are regarded as a “window of opportunity” for initiating smoking cessation programs. The evidence supports that even a brief intervention is effective in promoting smoking cessation but support during admission to healthcare facilities with follow-up after discharge is more effective at sustaining quit rates.

AHS properties are expected to have fully implemented the policy. All AHS representatives are required to be in compliance with the policy.

Support for AHS Representatives

Cessation counselling support for AHS representatives is available through www.albertaquits.ca and the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). For cessation medication coverage, staff can access their employee health benefits. AHS representatives who do not have health benefit plans have access to nicotine replacement therapy, 80% reimbursement (up to \$3,000), through Human Resources.

Staff who are not yet ready to quit consuming tobacco, but are willing to go a shift without smoking may consider using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (nicotine gum, patches, inhalers, and lozenges). This protects them from experiencing discomfort when following policy and protects others from second hand and third hand smoke.

Tobacco odour brought in by AHS representatives can worsen withdrawal symptoms, or cause unpleasant symptoms for patients and co-workers who may be sensitive, or allergic to tobacco products. While this is not specifically for smoking cessation, it is to assist staff in avoiding smoking during work hours. For more information contact: nrt@ahs.ca

Special Considerations

In rare instances, patients meeting specific criteria, may apply for special considerations for tobacco and tobacco-like product use by submitting an Application for Special Considerations as per the Special Considerations Guide.

Ceremonial Tobacco Use Protocol

Traditional Aboriginal spiritual and cultural practices and ceremonies involving the burning of tobacco or a tobacco-like product shall only be permitted in designated spaces, as determined by the Property Manager in consultation with the Indigenous Health Program.

Enforcement

Many of AHS's Protective Services staff are trained Community Peace Officers and have the authority to fine people who are not complying with the TSRA. AHS Community Peace Officers monitor facilities and approach anyone not compliant with the Act to educate them about the legislation and AHS' commitment to tobacco and smoke-free environments and redirect them to the nearest butt out receptacle. If an individual is consuming a tobacco product within five meters (16 feet) of a doorway, open window or air intake, Protective Services may issue a Provincial Violation Ticket of \$287.

Although only Protective Services Peace Officers can fine people under the TSRA, all AHS representatives have a role to play in promoting and enforcing the TSFE policy with patients and members of the public who visit AHS facilities.

Staff who continue to consume tobacco on AHS property may be subject to penalty under the Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act, and applicable municipal bylaws, as well as disciplinary action in accordance with AHS' Progressive Discipline Procedure #EAR-02-04. This may progress to a written warning, suspension with or without pay, and dismissal.

Under the Alberta TSRA, the manager of a facility must not permit smoking in a prohibited area. Managers who permit smoking where it is prohibited are liable for fines ranging from up to \$10,000 for a first offence and up to \$100,000 for a second or subsequent offence.

Tobacco-like Products

The use of tobacco-like products including electronic cigarettes and medical/recreational marijuana is restricted on AHS property. For more information please refer to the following documents:

- Electronic cigarette information for health professionals
- Electronic cigarette information for patients

Support for Policy Implementation

The Tobacco and Smoke Free Environments Policy Committee has established a TSFE Policy Consultation Team to support sites that have questions or challenges related to the policy. The team can be contacted: tru@albertahealthservices.ca