

Renters for life: Ensuring healthy housing that supports well-being for all of our communities

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Secondhand Smoke Harms

- Secondhand smoke (SHS) continues to be a major cause of death and disability in the U.S.- 40,000+ non-smoker tobacco deaths/year
- Surgeon General has stated "no risk-free level of exposure... known carcinogen." (Surgeon General 2006)
- CA Air Resources Board lists SHS as a "toxic air contaminant"

Why Housing?

- Our local Tobacco Education Coalition success has increased secondhand smoke protections in bars, restaurants, parks, and other settings
- We receive many calls from senior citizens and parents of young children asking how they can protect their families from drifting smoke in their apartments/condos
 - "I worry about my daughter getting a lot of colds since this started"
 - Sense of helplessness (Non-Smokers Rights Assoc., 2010)
- People spend the majority of their time at home
 - 8.7 hours sleeping; 2.8 hours watching TV; 1.8 hours housework (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010)

Smoke-free Housing Trends

- Vast majority of homeowners have adopted smoke-free policies
- Market rate rentals are increasingly adopting smoke-free policies- 78% of CA voters support smoke-free housing (American Lung 2008)
- Some cities have already adopted smoke-free housing policies- Belmont the first in the world, Menlo Park and San Mateo County have common area protections
- Public Housing Authorities manage many properties and an increasing number are adopting policies affecting thousands of renters

Lower Income Renters Face Unfair Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

- In multi-unit apartments, tenants have little control over the tobacco use practices of their neighbors
- Cheaper, smaller apartment units are generally in larger buildings with tighter quarters and increased exposure
- Challenges in resolving this issue alone
 - Cannot move due to lack of down payment, few other apartment options
 - Usually no legal basis for taking action, at the mercy of the landlord and neighbor
 - Parents are often working multiple jobs, strapped for time, and advocacy can be a difficult process

Special Concerns: Health & Housing

- Need to communicate that this campaign is not anti-smoker, rather health-protective
- Immigration status can lead to tenants not wanting to speak up
- Landlords may be less responsive to tenants in properties that are older/ accrue lower rents
- Other issues often take the forefront- affordability, general habitability issues
- Tenant organization concerns about potential eviction, retaliation, and subverting rent control
- Opportunity to work with tenants who may not have confidence or advocacy experience

Achieving Safe Housing for All

- Advertising our willingness to help resolve these issues through newspapers and radio
- Coaching residents through their advocacy efforts
 - Talking to neighbor
 - Talking to and writing to landlord
 - Documenting the exposure and effects
 - We can write a supportive advocacy letter to landlord/smoker/city council if desired
- Engaging at all levels of housing
 - Market rate
 - Public housing
 - Most importantly not forgetting low income rental apartments

How This Becomes a Community Justice Victory

- Collaborating with local partners for a team effort:
 - Legal Aide Society
 - Engaging Disabilities Commission
 - Mental Health Commission
 - Social justice-focused religious groups
 - Local fire association
 - Asthma Coalition
 - Low income housing development/management
- Engaging cities on this issue, leading to more ordinances that protect all tenants in a jurisdiction

Expanding the Campaign

- Smoke-free substance abuse treatment facilities (recommendation from our focus group findings)
- Housing authority advocacy
- Educating landlord groups about the benefits of going smoke-free (financial and health)



Seniors Change the World!



The New York Times

January 27, 2009
Smoking Ban Hits Home. Truly.
By **JESSE MCKINLEY**
BELMONT, Calif.

- Belmont, CA senior renters were fed up with drifting smoke.
 - Did not want to spend their golden years at the mercy of a neighbor
 - A building fire led to a new policy, which was not being followed
 - Management would not resolve, so a group of seniors approached their city and demanded action
 - "A barking dog disturbs our sleep but will not kill us. Secondhand smoke is killing us," Mr. Ray Goodrich.
 - Our Tobacco Education Coalition teamed up with the seniors in the campaign to protect their homes

For more information

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Resources

- Winickoff, Gottlieb, and Mello. Regulation of Smoking in Public Housing. *New England Journal of Medicine*. June 2010. p. 2319-2325.
- Non-Smokers' Rights Association- Smoking and Health Action Foundation. *Smoke-Free Affordable Housing: Picking on Poor People or a Case for Social Justice?* Spring 2010.
http://www.nsr-aadnf.ca/cms/file/Social_Justice_final.pdf
- *Michigan Smoke-free Apartments*
 - mismokefreeapartment.org