

● Implementing the U.S. Public Health Service Clinical Practice Guidelines for Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence

Case Study: Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center

- Tobacco-free Campus Policy and Enforcement
- Ask, Advise, Refer
- Documentation and Electronic Health Records (EHR)
- Billing and Reimbursement Strategies
- Use of Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line
- Quit Medication



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Introduction

Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center (ANHC) has been serving Anchorage residents since 1974. ANHC was Alaska's first community health center. It is recognized under section 330 of the Public Health Act as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). ANHC's mission is to provide wellness by providing the highest quality care with compassion and accessible services for our community. As Alaska's largest community health center, with more than 40,000 visits per year serving more than 12,000 individuals, ANHC's reach and influence is abundant. Their determination and vision to become a tobacco-free campus demonstrates, to their patients and staff, an overall commitment to community health and well-being.

ANHC opened the doors of their brand new, state-of-the art health center on September 17, 2012, as a tobacco-free campus. The move to become a tobacco-free campus took a great deal of planning, strategy and time and is now a success story that others can learn from.

Lessons Learned

- Draw on the many resources available to organizations who want to go tobacco-free. ANHC followed an eight-step process recommended by the American Cancer Society. They also modeled their effort after successful local organizations who paved the way by going smokefree (ANTHC/ANMC and Providence Hospital).
- Obtain the blessing of leadership – ANHC management support was essential to the success of the policy. Be prepared to do whatever it takes to convince management it makes sense to go tobacco-free.
- Anticipate who may be skeptical, involve them in the process and address their concerns. ANHC formed a committee of non-tobacco users and tobacco users and worked with them to make sure all issues were heard and addressed.
- Have resources available for tobacco users – ANHC health insurance covers cessation expenses. This was shared and promoted to employees who may need cessation help. Patients are referred to Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line for free telephonic coaching and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).
- Develop a broad coalition – the ANHC team included key staff from the health center's administration, patient advocates, program managers, smokers and non-smokers. Combine complementary skills and strengths to be more effective.
- Send a clear, positive message to staff and patients – ANHC marketing staff were involved to create slogans such as "Change is in the air" and "Let's clear the air together."
- Make everyone responsible for enforcement – health center staff are expected to promote health in every way. It is appropriate for them to ask people to not use tobacco on the campus when the overall goal is to improve patient health.
- After implementing a policy, the work is not over. Enforcement is an everyday task.

Advocates on Staff

Strong advocates are instrumental to positive organizational change. Connie Markis, a registered nurse by training, has worked at ANHC for years. She is known as the compassionate and concerned voice directing ANHC's Healthcare for the Homeless program. The program focuses on outreach to people living on the street by inviting them to receive healthcare services at ANHC. Along with being an advocate for Anchorage's homeless population, Connie is passionate about ending tobacco use altogether. She has watched homeless clients struggle with tobacco and the costs associated with feeding their addiction.

Connie was a strong force behind the push that made ANHC a tobacco-free facility; however, Connie would be the first to tell you she did not do it alone. She learned from other health organizations in Alaska who paved the way with their tobacco-free campus policies. Connie also participated in a statewide coalition convened by the State of Alaska's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program called Leadership for Eliminating Alaska Disparities (LEAD), where she sought inspiration, support and advice from other tobacco-free campus advocates. In addition, the management of ANHC; a champion board member, Vanessa Salinas; and staff member Patricia Mitchell, Human Resources Director, worked together to make sure the dream became a reality.

Step by Step Process

On May 31, 2012, the ANHC Board passed a tobacco-free campus policy that would go into effect on September 1, 2012, as they moved into their new building. This decision was at least two years in the making.

As early as 2010, Connie had discussions with Joan Fischer, the Executive Director of ANHC at the time, about making the health center a tobacco-free campus. While she was very supportive, the health center was in the midst of a major effort to raise funds to build a new facility. They discussed that the right time to become a tobacco-free campus would be when they moved into their new facility.

A year before: Policy advocates recognized the importance of reaching out to local advocates such as the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society and Providence Hospital for assistance in the planning process. ANHC policy champions met with these organizations to strategize and develop a plan to go tobacco-free.

ANHC Timeline:

One Year Before:

Local advocates helped champions at ANHC develop a strategy

Nine Months Before:

Representatives from community organizations presented to the ANHC management team about the benefits of becoming a tobacco-free campus

Six Months Before:

Noted concerns of tobacco users on staff; created a committee of tobacco and non-tobacco users; developed a survey to get staff feedback; provided staff trainings (role-play techniques) to prepare for enforcement

Three Months Before:

Communicated policy through marketing and advertising

One Month After:

Celebrated implementation of campus policy through events and continued enforcement of policy

ANHC Staff Survey

Do you currently use tobacco?

Yes: 13.6%
No: 84.9%

Are you ever exposed to secondhand smoke on the ANHC campus?

Yes: 57.5%
No: 41%
No response: 1.3%

Are you aware that ANHC's medical insurance plan provides assistance for quitting tobacco?

Yes: 50.6%
No: 49.3%

Are you familiar with Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line?

Yes: 75.3%
No: 24.6%

What advantages do you see to creating a tobacco-free campus?
(Open-ended)

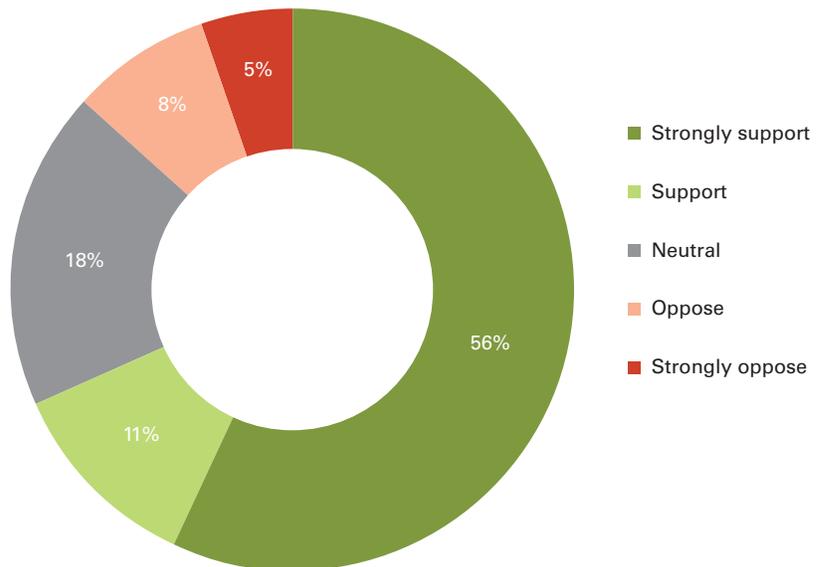
What concerns would you have about transitioning to a tobacco-free campus?
(Open-ended)

Nine months before: Policy advocates were somewhat surprised to learn that some of the management team had reservations about the policy, as they thought it would be a smooth and easy process. Representatives from community organizations were invited to present to the ANHC management team to allay their concerns about staff and patient backlash and the challenge of enforcement. The policy advocates realized the importance of their relationship with seasoned advocates who could address management concerns and alleviate their fears. The policy advocates learned how important it was to be well prepared and anticipate all possible arguments against the policy change.

Six months before: The policy advocates had been made aware that staff who used tobacco were very concerned about the possibility of the policy change. One staff member even mentioned he would have to quit if the campus became tobacco-free. The policy change team convened a committee of tobacco users so these staff members could express their concerns. The tobacco users were met with compassion and understanding by the tobacco policy advocates and through the committee process understood that the policy change was not meant to be an affront to their challenges with tobacco use but to help support them to live a healthy life.

The Mission 100 team worked with Connie and the committee to develop a staff survey. The seven-question survey went out to all staff to gauge attitudes and beliefs around a tobacco-free campus policy. A total of 73 participants completed the survey.

Question: Which option best describes your opinion about ANHC transitioning to a tobacco-free campus?



Through the survey, Connie and Patricia found that the majority of staff (67 percent) supported the transition to a tobacco-free campus. While the majority of staff were in support of the policy, the survey was invaluable to learning what reservations staff members had. The survey was a great tool for helping to anticipate backlash and hone effective arguments.

Three months before: Banners and placards were produced to inform patients of the policy change with slogans like “We are proud to go tobacco-free starting September 1st. Your new health center opens September 17th as a Tobacco-Free Campus,” “Change is in the air” and “Let’s clear the air together.” These materials were included in ANHC’s promotional brochures, flyers and on the website.

A month after: Staff hosted an ANHC Grand Opening Celebration which included an announcement of the policy, along with tobacco cessation resources, primarily a booth promoting Alaska’s Tobacco Quit Line. Visitors were encouraged to stop by the booth and learn about the services of the quit line.

Two months after the implementation of ANHC’s tobacco-free campus, Connie and Patricia hosted a Tobacco-Free Campus Celebration on November 15, 2012, coinciding with the American Cancer Society’s annual Great American Smoke Out. This event targeted patients and staff. A table was set at the front door of the building and food was provided. Quit line information was available and tobacco treatment specialists were present to provide options for patients who wanted to quit.

“ I’ll admit, I was a little naive. I thought we would just decide to go tobacco-free, and then go tobacco-free, because after all, we are a healthcare facility. I was surprised that we would have to do as much convincing and education about the benefits of a tobacco-free campus. ”

– Connie Markis



Ongoing Effort

As part of their implementation efforts, the health center updated their hiring manual, application process and new employee orientation to share information about the organization's tobacco-free status. Permanent signage throughout the parking lot and building reminds patients and visitors about the tobacco-free campus. All staff are expected to help enforce the policy by gently reminding patients and visitors that the campus is tobacco-free and tobacco cessation treatment is available from ANHC and through Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line. Patients are reminded of the tobacco-free policy when appointments are scheduled. For the most part, staff have willingly accepted their role as enforcers of the policy and are pleased that ANHC is now tobacco-free.

Campus Policy Enforcement Encounter:

Not always a walk in the park...

A staff member recently described a patient encounter that left her a bit rattled when she observed a patient smoking a cigarette outside ANHC doors.

The staff member went up to the patient in a non-threatening manner to remind him that the campus is tobacco-free: "I'm sorry, sir, but you will have to put out your cigarette, as this is a tobacco-free campus."

The patient angrily told the staff member that he was on the phone. The staff member patiently reminded him about the campus policy: "I know you are on the phone, but smoking is not allowed on our campus."

After a few reminders, the patient put out his cigarette but seemed rather agitated. Thankfully, once he was finished with his telephone call, he came into the building and apologized to the staff member.

Implementation Challenges:

- Signage – the campus and parking lot space is large, and the initial signs were eaten up by the space; at first there were no signs at the front entrance.
- Wastebaskets with ashtrays were still on campus when the policy took effect, sending a mixed message to clients and staff of ANHC. New wastebaskets and tobacco-free campus signage were installed.
- Continued reminders about the new policy to tobacco-using patients and staff had to occur.
- Complaints from patients and other staff about upkeep of the policy were heard, specifically regarding cigarette butts on the ground, staff not enforcing the policy and staff smoking on the side of the building.
- Staff are now stepping right off campus to the ground of a nearby restaurant to smoke. Policy advocates are aware and are planning to work with the neighbor restaurant to, at a minimum, make certain ANHC staff are not leaving their butts behind.

It is a learning process and there will always be challenges!

