

Tobacco-Free Worksites In Bucks

Tobacco-Free Workplaces are good for business. "All employees and customers are important and deserve the opportunity to breathe tobacco-free air. The least desirable choice that Employers can make in the year 2007 is to do nothing to address the issue of tobacco-smoke pollution in the workplace." states Chip Baker, Worksite Services Manager for BEACON Worksites Services, a Program of the Bucks County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.

The American Cancer Society reports that 440,000 people die from tobacco use each year in the United States in addition to 53,000 deaths from the effects of secondhand smoke exposure according to the Centers for Disease Control. Since people spend most of their waking hours at work, tobacco smoke in the workplace can present a clear and present danger to others who share common air. The Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT) commissioned a voter attitude survey that was completed by Susquehanna Polling and Research. A total of 700 registered voters in Pennsylvania participated in the survey which was conducted between May 7-10, 2007. Here are some of the results.

- 86% of Pennsylvania voters surveyed agreed that restaurants and bars would be healthier for customers and employees if they were smoke free
- 84% of Pennsylvania voters surveyed agreed that all Pennsylvania workers should be protected from secondhand smoke in the workplace
- 75% of Pennsylvanians are concerned about the harmful health effects of secondhand smoke
- 79% of Pennsylvanians consider secondhand smoke to be a health hazard

A study prepared by Philadelphia Health Management Corporation in 2003, with 394 participating Bucks County Worksites, compiled information and made recommendations on Bucks County Worksite Tobacco Policies and Practices. The Study revealed that approximately 90% of the respondents do not permit smoking in any indoor public areas, indoor work areas, and indoor non-work areas. Three out of four survey participants indicated that they were somewhat or very likely to restrict or further restrict smoking at their worksites. One of the key recommendations from the Survey was the importance of not only increasing smoke-free workplaces but also being helpful in providing information to increase the number of smoke-free employees.

What can Employers do to reduce smoking at work? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The American Cancer Society, and The Wellness Councils of America have published a resource text titled "Making Your Workplace Smokefree: A Decision Maker's Guide" which is readily available online for Employers by contacting the U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention." Here are several suggestions for enhancing smoke-free workplaces and workforces:

- Develop a Smoke-Free Workplace Policy and inform employees in advance that the policy is being developed and when it will be implemented. Some employers utilize a Taskforce of employees, both smokers and non-smokers for input in the preparation of the policy.
- Prior to and after the implementation of the policy encourage participation in smoking-cessation programs such as the Pennsylvania Quit Line (1-800-784-8669), Quitnet (www.quitnet.com), Smoking Cessation Groups at area Hospitals contact Bucks County Health Improvement Partnership (215-710-2264), and Tobacco-Free Living Workshops (cbaker@bccadd.org).
- Place signage in key locations noting that the Workplace is Smoke-Free.
- Provide reimbursement for participating in smoking cessation programs and where possible for the cost of nicotine replacement therapies including medications.
- Policies and programs should not be interpreted as "anti-smoker." The overwhelming majority of people who smoke want to quit and have tried on multiple occasions. Encourage quitting through wellness programs.

Policies establishing smoke-free workplaces and supporting employees in their efforts to quit are a powerful combination for protecting the health and welfare of both workers and customers. Twenty seven states have tobacco-free legislation which eliminates or limit smoking in the workplace including New Jersey, Delaware, New York and Connecticut according to the American Non Smokers Rights Foundation (2007), Can Pennsylvania be far behind?

Companies in Bucks County can receive information and assistance in developing and maintaining Tobacco-Free Worksites by contacting Chip Baker at cbaker@bccadd.org or calling 215-230-8218 Ext.3151 . BEACON Worksite Services, a Program of the Bucks County Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence, Inc.

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