SANE Smokefree Guidelines

Best practice in staying smokefree
for mental health NGOs (non-government organisations)

**These Guidelines will help your service develop and implement a
smokefree policy that will lead to improved health for both clients
and workers.**

Why make mental health services smokefree?

Smoking is the leading risk factor for disease throughout the world.
People with mental illness make up over 38% of all smokers in
Australia and are more likely than the general public to be heavy
smokers.

Many people with a mental illness are interested in quitting,
however, and are able to do so given the right support. The
entrenched smoking culture in mental health services is starting
to change. Support and advice on quitting, along with Nicotine
Replacement Therapy (NRT) and other treatments, can improve
cessation rates in people with mental illness to as high as those in
the general population.

When NGOs provide supportive environments for reducing and
quitting smoking, both clients and workers benefit.

- Smokers who want to quit are supported.
- It is easier for ex-smokers to stay non-smokers.
- Once people quit, they have more money, experience immediate
  and long-term health benefits and have an increased sense of
  control over their lives.
- Staff benefit from a healthier work environment.

Facts and figures

- At least 42% of all cigarettes sold in Australia
  are smoked by people with a mental illness.
- At least 50% of regular smokers with mental
  illness will die prematurely from smoking-
  related disease.
- Many people with a mental illness are
  interested in quitting and are able to do so with
  the right support.
- The total financial cost to Australia from
  smoking by people with a mental illness has
  been estimated at $3.53 billion dollars (2005).
- Smokefree environments are becoming
  widespread as legislation changes to protect
  the public from second-hand smoke.
- Smokefree environments benefit the overall
  health of the community.

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AUSTRALIA

Being smokefree is not just a matter of putting up a 'No Smoking' sign. It is an important initiative which can have a major impact on improving the health and wellbeing of your clients and staff.

The process may not always be easy, however. Both smoking and non-smoking staff, as well as clients and visitors, may feel that it is not the role of the organisation to impose rules on smoking. However, NGOs do have a duty of care to provide a safe, healthy environment, as well as to comply with any legislation and government regulations in this area. Physical and mental health are integral to each other and the health of the whole person.

Following these Guidelines – tailoring them to suit your organisation where appropriate – increases the likelihood that your smokefree policy is successful and is accepted by staff, clients and visitors.

The aims of a smokefree policy are to:

- eliminate or reduce exposure to tobacco smoke among clients, staff, volunteers, and visitors
- increase knowledge of the serious harm caused to health by smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke
- increase the number of clients and staff who quit or reduce smoking.

Creating a smokefree environment in your organisation will be most effective when implemented as part of an overall healthy living strategy. See www.sane.org for details of the SANE Mind and Body initiative for ideas and further resources on this topic.

Planning and Preparation

- Allow at least six months for planning and preparation. Allow at least a further six months for support.
- Support from the organisation's Board and senior management is essential. They need to agree on timeframe and scope – for example, 100% smokefree by the end of a 12-month period or a smoking area in the grounds but not inside the buildings.
- Staff support is also critical. Conduct a simple survey on staff readiness. Assess prevalence of smoking amongst staff, and their knowledge of, and attitudes to, smoking and the harm it causes.
- Form a planning and implementation group with staff and client representation, to oversee consultation, implementation, monitoring and review of the policy.
- Appoint a staff member to be Smokefree Coordinator, responsible for implementation and evaluation of the policy.
- Allocate a budget for training, cessation support programs, free or subsidised NRT, signage and shelters for designated outdoor smoking areas.

- Communicate to all staff what is happening, what the process will be, and that all staff will be consulted throughout the process. Find staff champions.
- Begin staff education, in particular on the harm of smoking, how to provide cessation support as well as on the planned smoking policy. Encourage smoking cessation or reduction by staff.
- Build a case for change. Provide information to staff, visitors and clients on the evidence regarding smoking and mental illness, and smokefree environments.
- Prepare the draft policy (see sample included with these Guidelines). Consult with Board members and senior management. Ensure staff understand the implications of the policy, and allow them time to comment on it.
- Finalise policy.

Implementation

- Support staff champions to promote the new policy within the organisation.
- Ensure all staff know about smokefree workplace laws. Are they aware of the penalties for non-compliance, or how to report non-compliance? Train specific staff to act as enforcement officers and ensure they have the appropriate responsibility to be able to enforce the policy.
- Offer cessation support, in the form of a quit program, support groups, referrals and free or subsidised NRT. Use the *SANE Smokefree Kit* for an 8-session program to reduce and quit smoking, specifically designed for people living with mental illness. It is strongly advised that clients consult with a doctor prior to quitting or reducing smoking.
- Address smoking by clients within an overall approach to improving physical health. Ensure staff trainers can deliver smoking education and cessation support to clients.
- Communicate with the wider community, volunteers and contractors about the new policy, and prepare for media coverage if wanted.
- Organise an official launch. Extend staff education to clients and visitors, and emphasise the harm caused by smoking and the many positive benefits of reducing and quitting smoking.

Think about timing, signage and who you will invite to the launch – for example, health professionals who are expert in the area, clinicians and peer workers. If media coverage is wanted, inform local journalists of the launch event.

Sustainability

- Maintain ongoing leadership that is clear, consistent and visible.

- Maintain access to smoking cessation support in the long-term.

- Implement a monitoring and review schedule. Inform all relevant people of the milestones. Review policy annually. Consult with staff after each review.

- Management and the Smokefree Coordinator need to be able to help staff with problem-solving as any concerns arise.

- If applicable, follow-up with each service site in the first days of implementation so that sites feel included, supported and fully informed.

- Understand that going smokefree is an ongoing process not a single event. Maintain communication about smokefree policy via staff meetings, emails and other internal channels.

- Consider providing a comments box as a safe way for staff, clients or visitors to provide feedback.

- Celebrate your organisation's successes in making the smokefree change.

- Integrate smokefree policy with existing policies on healthy living and the use of alcohol and other drugs.

- Evaluate the process and, if necessary, write it up for publication.

What should be in a smokefree policy?

A smokefree policy should include:

- A brief introduction with the reasoning and principles behind the smokefree policy.

- An outline of the organisation's smokefree sites and vehicles as well as a guide to designated smoking areas, if relevant. Add specific information for each site including maps of any designated smoking areas.

- Statements outlining the organisation's policy on:
  - Staff smoking breaks
  - Smoking with clients
  - Home visits and other settings
  - Smoking in organisation cars
  - Smoking at organisation functions.

- A statement that volunteers and contractors who work on-site are required to comply with the policy.

- An outline of the support provided for clients and staff interested in quitting.

- A statement that all clients (new and existing) are to be asked about their smoking and assessed for readiness to quit at appropriate intervals.

- An outline of what will happen if people ignore the policy, and the consequences of breaching the policy.

- Contact details of the Smokefree Coordinator.

- Statement of the organisation's intention to work for consistent smokefree policy and practice in partnership with other agencies working with the same client group.

- A clear statement outlining who is responsible for implementing and enforcing the policy.

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Sample Smokefree Policy

- Our organisation is committed to providing a healthy work and service delivery environment and is therefore a smokefree organisation. All offices, adjacent outside areas, interactions with clients, and company vehicles are smokefree.

- Staff will explain our organisation's commitment to providing a healthy environment for staff and clients, and will support this policy by:

  - providing clients with a positive role model by refraining from smoking while meeting them

  - where appropriate, requesting that clients and their carers refrain from smoking in their presence

  - providing information to clients on internal and external supports available to reduce and quit smoking

  - promoting healthy lifestyle choices when meeting with clients

  - confining smoking to discrete locations and only in break periods or staff member's own time.

- All visitors, volunteers and contractors are informed of, and expected to comply, with this policy.

- Staff will be supported with the skills and resources necessary to assist clients in their efforts to reduce or quit smoking.

- Staff will use <specify selected brief intervention tool> to explore risk, readiness to quit and prompt short interventions.

- Information and support on smoking cessation will be available to clients.

- Smoking cessation support groups will be available through the organisation's <insert program name>.

- Nicotine Replacement Theraphy (NRT) is now available at a subsidised rate for people on the Disability Support Pension. We will actively source opportunities for all clients to access subsidised NRT.

- The organisation will develop partnerships with relevant local services and programs to support clients and staff in this area.

- List details of programs and resources available and relevant contact persons.

- Any breach of this policy will lead to normal disciplinary action. <Describe organisation's disciplinary procedures>

- Staff and client inquiries or feedback can be forwarded to <insert details of nominated contact person>.

- The responsibility for enforcing this policy rests with managers and supervisors.

- The organisation will work for consistent smokefree policy and practice with all our partner agencies.

SANE Australia has developed a range of resources to help people quit smoking, including:

- The *SANE Guide to a Smokefree Life* for individuals

- The *SANE Smokefree Kit* for organisations to run courses for clients with a mental illness

- Factsheet on *Smoking and Mental Illness*

- *SANE Smokefree Guidelines for GPs*

- Factsheets and Podcasts on healthy living.

For more information on resources and the SANE Mind and Body Initiative, see the Campaigns area of www.sane.org or contact info@sane.org.

www.sane.org