



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc  
Commissioner

July 2021

Dear Health Care, Social Service and Housing Providers:

Smoke-free spaces, including smoke-free housing, have expanded across New York City (NYC). Many smoke-free policies apply not only to common areas but also to individual apartments. These policies are an important way to limit secondhand smoke exposure and protect the health of all New Yorkers. At the same time, we need to work together to support residents who smoke to navigate and live in these spaces, including homes, workplaces and health care programs. This is particularly true in many behavioral health and supportive housing settings as well as in NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings, which are all smoke-free.

Ensuring access to information, treatment and tools to address tobacco use is critical for *all* New Yorkers who smoke. This nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) toolkit promotes a new supportive approach of offering tobacco treatment to all patients and clients who smoke, regardless of their readiness to quit. The toolkit includes educational materials and resources to apply this new strategy. NRT can be used to help people follow residential or workplace policies, engage in day-to-day activities, or save money and reach other goals, even if they have little or no interest in quitting. This work is especially important as we try to keep New Yorkers safe from respiratory disease and infection since smoking increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness.

While the adult smoking rate has declined by 40% since 2002, tobacco use remains a leading cause of death in NYC, killing about 12,000 New Yorkers annually. Smoking rates also remain high among certain populations, including people with mental health and substance use disorders as well as New Yorkers living in shelters and transitional and public housing. Historically, the tobacco and vaping industry has resisted increased regulation and oversight, while also using manipulative marketing tactics to target specific communities, which have contributed to these inequities.

We urge you to use the information in this toolkit to provide practical advice and support to help your patients and clients engage with all the activities that make their lives meaningful. Together, we can improve the health of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave A. Chokshi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc  
Commissioner

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene