

# Smoke-Free NYCHA Guiding Principles for Implementation

From the Advisory Group on Smoking and Health  
July 2018

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# Welcome

On July 30, 2018, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is going smoke-free. In response to a mandate from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), smoking will no longer be allowed in the 175,636 apartments and 2,418 buildings that make up NYCHA, as well as areas within 25 feet of a NYCHA building. This initiative, called Smoke-Free NYCHA, is an important opportunity to improve the health of the 1 in 14 New Yorkers who call NYCHA home and to address longstanding inequities in health faced by residents, who are predominantly low-income people of color.

A key component of Smoke-Free NYCHA was the formation of the Advisory Group on Smoking and Health, made up of eight NYCHA resident members and eight members from partner agencies and organizations. With diverse expertise and perspectives, the Advisory Group was able to identify and address issues and challenges related to implementation and to develop concrete strategies to address them.

These challenges are numerous. In addition to its large scale (with approximately 400,000 residents, it's larger than many major cities), NYCHA was provided only 18 months to design and implement the smoke-free policy. NYCHA also faces severe budget constraints, experiencing a \$3 billion reduction in federal operating and capital funding since 2001. Within these constraints, strong partnerships with residents, as well as partners in government, advocacy organizations, hospitals, and academia, are critical to ensuring that implementation is thoughtful, considerate of the needs of different populations, and supported by many different stakeholders.

NYCHA is building these partnerships through a broad strategy that engaged residents and partners early in the policy development and implementation planning process, as described later in this document. NYCHA incorporated feedback about hopes, concerns, experiences, and ideas into a multi-dimensional strategy to improve the health of its residents.

This document is a summary of the work conducted by the Advisory Group. It presents a vision and a set of guiding principles for Smoke-Free NYCHA as well as recommended strategies and activities to support implementation. It also includes some of the commitments made by Advisory Group members to support implementation through education, cessation support, communication tools, and evaluation.

The Advisory Group invites you to join the growing network of organizations working with NYCHA to go smoke-free by supporting the strategies outlined in this document. Implementing Smoke-Free NYCHA is a gradual process, but with the partnership, long-term commitment, and support from residents and partners, it will succeed.

# Advisory Group Members

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Shirley Williams, NYCHA Resident  
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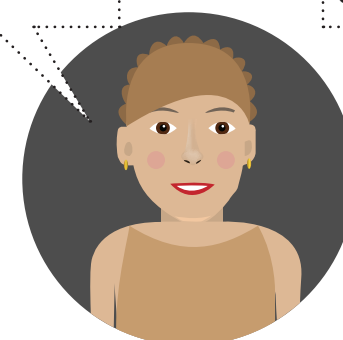
Special thanks to Andrea Mata, Director, and Marvin Jean-Jacques, Program Manager, Health Initiatives, New York City Housing Authority.

DISCLAIMER: This report was drafted by Elizabeth Hamby, the Acting Director of Health Equity in All Policies at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. It synthesizes the discussions and recommendations of the Advisory Group on Smoking and Health, which included participants of diverse expertise and affiliations. The findings and recommendations expressed in this report are a summary of the Advisory Group's collective work, and they do not necessarily represent the views of the employers or affiliate institutions of the Advisory Group members.

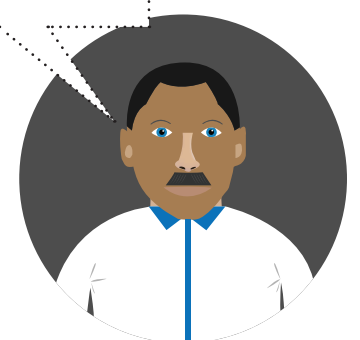
# Background: Smoking & Health at NYCHA

Smoking rates in New York City have been declining since 2002, but NYCHA residents still smoke at rates higher than other New Yorkers. The background to a recent study of East Harlem residents that examined smoking points to a number of factors, including stress, discrimination, targeted advertising, and longstanding economic, physical, and structural barriers to cessation and prevention, to explain this gap. High smoking rates also mean that non-smoking NYCHA residents are disproportionately impacted by secondhand smoke. According to a 2012 survey, more than half of NYCHA residents report smelling smoke at home.<sup>3</sup>

It's in the hallway, it's coming into my house, and I'm a non-smoker with asthmatic kids.<sup>1</sup>



My son got sick when we moved here. He has asthma, and he got it because of people smoking. I have to give him medicine and do a lot to keep the smoke out of my home.<sup>2</sup>



# Advisory Group Process

The Advisory Group on Smoking and Health was facilitated by Elizabeth Hamby, Assistant Director of Public Housing and Health at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Group members met on a bi-weekly basis from June through October 2017. They used a variety of tools to explore resident feedback, build empathy for resident experience, and design recommendations that are tailored to the particular needs and concerns of NYCHA communities.

These tools, combined with the group's expertise in tobacco control, cessation, advocacy, public health, and NYCHA resident leadership, produced a rich set of insights and ideas, all of which informed the development of this document.



What we're trying to do at 830 Amsterdam is become a family who really cares about where they live, who cares about their children, who cares about the air. We want to be that model building who knows that there are certain things that are not healthy for us.<sup>4</sup>



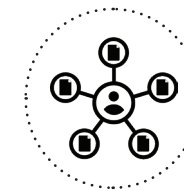
Shirley Williams, Advisory Group Member and 830 Amsterdam Resident Association President

# Vision

Smoke-Free NYCHA should improve the health of NYCHA residents by creating cleaner indoor air, expanding opportunities for resident leadership, and increasing access to resources to prevent smoking and to help people who want to quit.



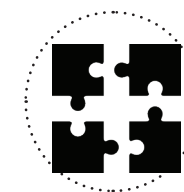
Implementation should be grounded in a long-term commitment to improving the health of NYCHA residents, which is negatively impacted by secondhand smoke and other factors.



Implementation should be transparent, accountable, and inclusive of residents' feedback and guidance.



Implementation should be leveraged to support NYCHA resident engagement and leadership.



Implementation should be responsive to the needs and priorities of different communities and developments.

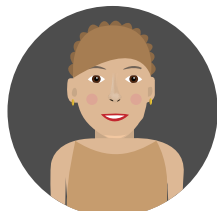
# Education

New and current NYCHA resident leaders can facilitate the implementation of Smoke-Free NYCHA through training and support. The Advisory Group discussed many different strategies to help residents understand the importance of Smoke-Free NYCHA and to work together to create healthy, smoke-free environments. The Advisory Group recommended offering training and education tailored to the needs and priorities of residents and resident leaders.



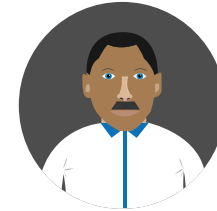
## For leaders who are ready to get started

Create an implementation toolkit or handbook, including talking points, activities, and available resources, that these leaders can use to support activities in their development.



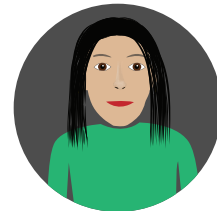
## For residents who want to become leaders

Train residents to develop local campaigns to support successful implementation at their development and to organize their neighbors to fight back against the tobacco industry.



## For residents & leaders who care about social justice

Help residents host workshops exploring the root causes of high smoking rates, including targeted marketing by the tobacco industry.



## For residents & leaders who want to grow their networks

Ensure that meetings facilitate networking and coordination among residents to lay the groundwork for future collaboration on implementation.



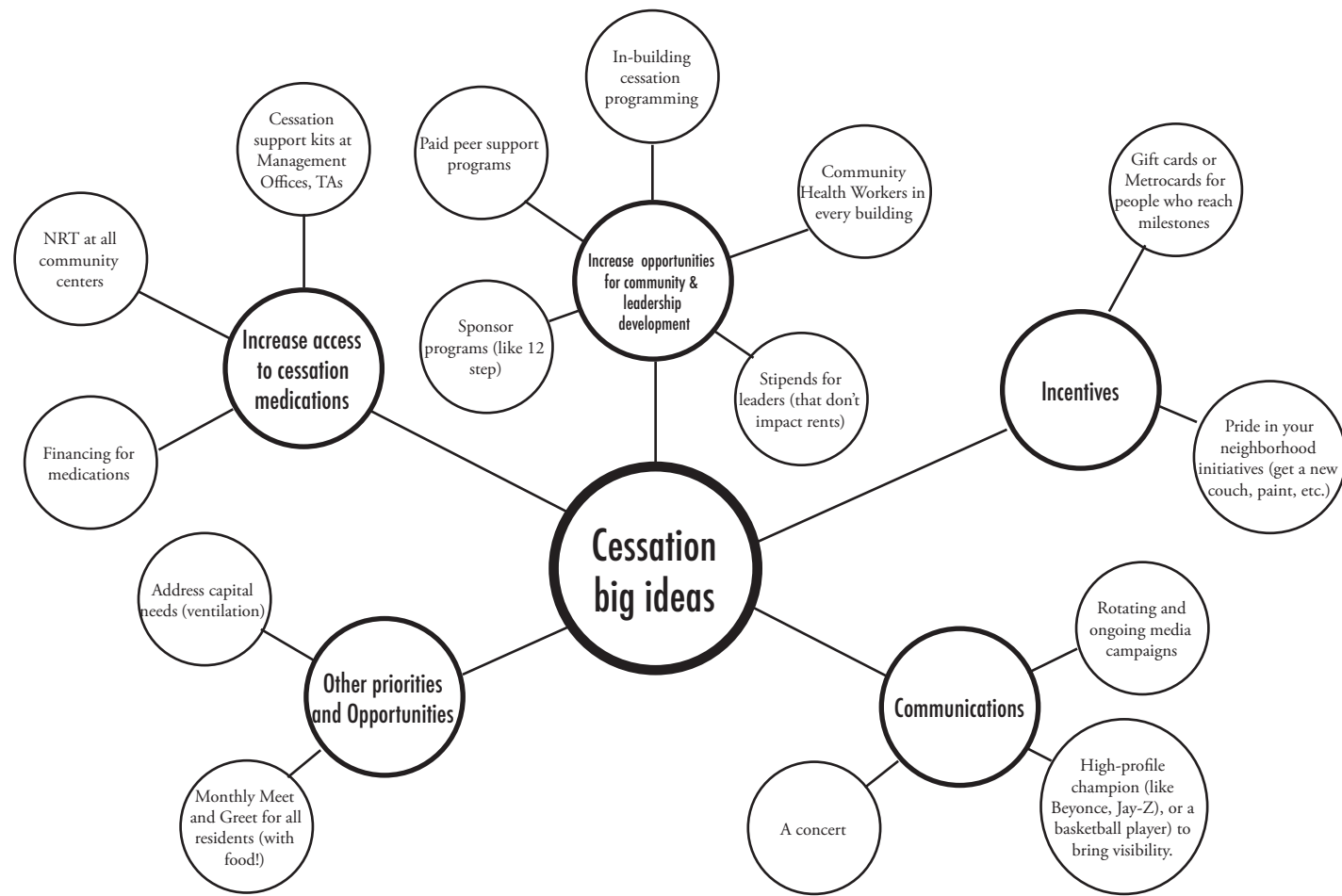
## For residents & leaders who care about health & equity

Help residents host workshops that use research and data to illuminate the differences in health outcomes between NYCHA residents and other New Yorkers.



## For residents & leaders who care about the environment

Encourage NYCHA to host workshops that comprehensively discuss efforts underway to create healthier homes at NYCHA.



Mind map of cessation ideas generated during brainstorming discussing during July 2017 deep dive discussion on cessation.

# Support for people who want to quit smoking

Smoke-Free NYCHA does not require residents to quit smoking, but research shows that more than two-thirds of people who smoke try to quit every year, and smoke-free housing can help people who smoke to smoke less or quit entirely.<sup>5</sup> Partners can work with NYCHA to provide multi-level support for cessation that will help quitters succeed. Removing barriers to quit-smoking medications and other forms of support can facilitate the first steps of the cessation journey, and cessation support through peer counseling and navigation can provide leadership and employment opportunities for NYCHA residents.

## Increase awareness and capacity of current resources

Many resources already exist to help people who want to go smoke-free along with their building. Through implementation, Smoke-Free NYCHA and partners can:

- Promote the NY State Smokers' Quitline, Help Me Quit app, NYC Quits Facebook page, and NYC Quits webpage
- Build partnerships to raise awareness of Medicaid benefits and rule changes among providers and health systems that serve NYCHA residents
- Support quitting by making medication and counseling available at NYCHA community centers

## Increase opportunities for NYCHA residents to help other residents quit smoking

- NYCHA residents can support friends, family, and neighbors who want to go smoke-free. Whether they are recognized as Community Health Workers (CHW) or simply advocates for health and wellness, residents can be trained to support one another by providing connections to resources as well as motivation and encouragement for quitters. At the Boston Public Housing Authority, which went smoke-free in 2012, residents who were trained as Tobacco Treatment Advocates successfully helped smokers quit and stay smoke-free.
- Increase the number of CHWs working with NYCHA residents
- Train existing CHWs as peer navigators and/or cessation counselors
- Train NYCHA staff and resident leaders who work with NYCHA residents (i.e., Resident Watch, Resident Engagement staff, Resident Associations) as peer navigators

## Offer incentives to generate excitement around cessation and celebrate those who succeed in going smoke-free

- Highlight special days, including New Year's Day, Kick Butts Day (March 21), World No Tobacco Day (May 31), Great American Smokeout (November 15), and July 30, 2018 (Smoke-Free NYCHA kickoff date), and create special offers (such as free nicotine replacement therapy) for quitters
- \* Celebrate "early adopter" developments and individuals with events, press highlights, and/or certificates

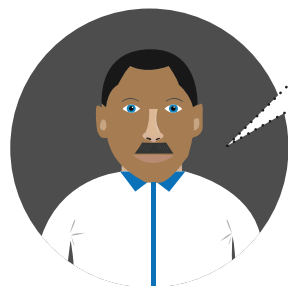
# Signage & Communications

Communication strategies that are tailored to the communities who live at NYCHA and use targeted channels and media are key to successful implementation. New, permanent “No Smoking” signage, as well as signs with information about Smoke-Free NYCHA, will be installed in NYCHA buildings across the city. Additional posters, signage, and communication strategies should be developed and deployed by NYCHA and partners as part of educational strategies and to connect residents who want to quit smoking with support and resources.

Signage is not the only way to share information about Smoke-Free NYCHA. Media and outreach campaigns across a variety of platforms, as well as person-to-person communications, help ensure that everyone understands the rule. And communication strategies that help residents talk to one another about smoking, secondhand smoke, and creating healthier indoor environments are key to the long-term sustainability of Smoke-Free NYCHA and other NYCHA health initiatives.

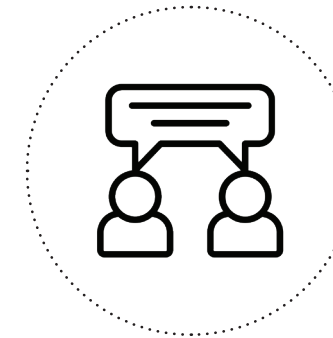
**The key messages that everyone should hear are:**

- Tobacco companies target low-income communities of color
- Smoke-free housing is a valuable health benefit that everyone should be able to access
- Let’s work together so that everyone can live in a smoke-free home
- We all share the air
- Quitting is hard, but you can do it, and we can help



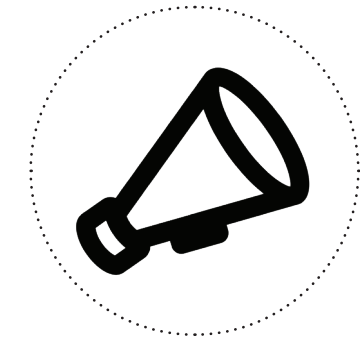
New, permanent signage will be installed throughout NYCHA developments notifying residents and guests of the smoke-free policy. The Advisory Group recommends that:

- Signage is written in the languages most commonly spoken at each development
- Signage includes information on how to report a violation and how to get support to quit smoking
- Signage stands out from other signage
- Temporary “pop-up” signage targets places where smoking occurs instead of targeting people who smoke



## Key Messengers

NYCHA  
DOHMH  
Residents and Resident Leaders  
People who have successfully quit smoking  
Local champions of Smoke-Free NYCHA  
Partners  
Youth  
Elected Officials



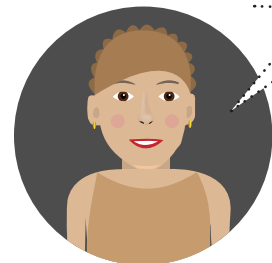
## Key platforms/media

Social media (memes, videos, infographics, photo stories, e-newsletter)  
Pop-up information/education stations (Family Days, Lobby Meetings, RA Meetings, etc.)  
NYCHA Journal  
Robo-calls  
Posters  
Palm cards  
Indoor and outdoor signage with maps  
Website

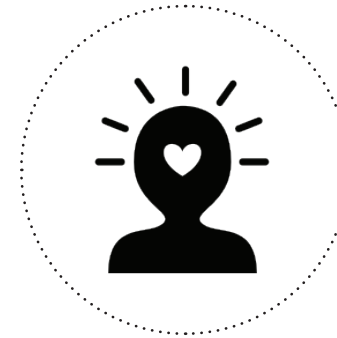


# Reducing Stressors, Managing Smoking Triggers, and Building Community Bonds

Throughout the engagement process, NYCHA residents described stress as a major factor in their lives. Both people who smoke and those who don't smoke described stressors ranging from family issues to discrimination and housing quality. People may smoke as a way to handle stress, especially in the short term. We recognize the importance of strategies that help reduce stressors overall across the population, managing smoking triggers, and building community bonds, as they will have longer lasting effects and increase the chances of successful smoking cessation.



If people had help managing stress, you would see a lot less smoking.<sup>6</sup>



## Reduce stressors

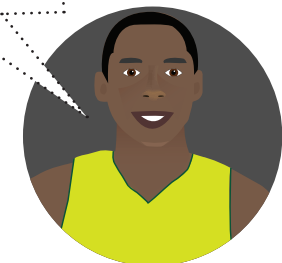
- Create employment opportunities for NYCHA residents as a key implementation strategy for Smoke-Free NYCHA
- Create opportunities for NYCHA residents to network and build community
- Support community organizing efforts to address ongoing stressors (including transportation, pollution, policing, etc.)



## Manage Smoking Triggers and Build Community Bonds

- Build the capacity of resident leaders to host healing circles, meditation, and yoga at NYCHA developments
- Improve indoor environments
- Improve outdoor environments (especially safety)
- Incorporate stress relief activities into Smoke-Free NYCHA meetings and events
- Host cultural events, exercise classes, and other programs

As neighbors, we have to stick together.<sup>7</sup>



# Clear consequences for people who break the rules

During the engagement process, NYCHA residents expressed frustration with neighbors' violations of existing policies, including smoking in common areas. In the focus groups, participants were "frustrated by exposure in common areas but also by smoke entering their apartments from smoking in front of

their doors and from other apartments where people smoke." Conversely, there were concerns that enforcement could be too aggressive, leading to eviction or police involvement.

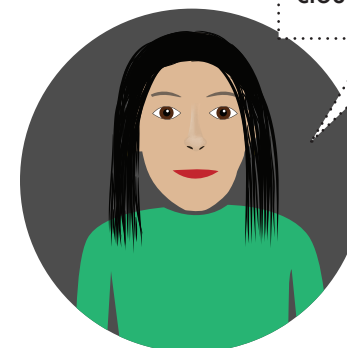
According to NYCHA's "Statement on Smoke-Free Housing" from its 2018 Annual Plan, "NYCHA staff observing violations can report them to the Property Management Office. Residents may report violations as well by calling the Customer Contact Center and providing details of the violation. Violations will be documented. After a staff member has observed a resident violating the policy, or in response to multiple resident-generated complaints that a resident has violated the policy, Property Management will conduct an informal conference with the resident to discuss the violation or violations. Property Management will provide materials to educate the resident on smoking and health topics such as the health effects of secondhand smoke and strategies to take smoking outside the buildings and the 25-foot perimeter. Property Management will also provide the resident with available smoking cessation resources. The lessee (and co-lessee) will agree in writing to comply with the smoke-free policy and will acknowledge that further violations can result in the commencement of termination of tenancy proceedings."

## Overall Feedback from the Advisory Group

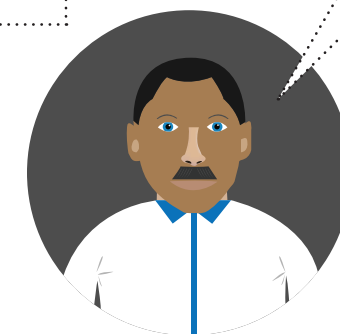
- Enforcement, education, and communications need to be closely coordinated and aligned to ensure that residents have accurate information, a clear sense of enforcement protocol, and know what to do if they witness a violation.
- Self-enforcement will be key. Create a culture of non-smoking and find a way to reward positive behavior rather than just punishing negative behavior.

## Respond to breaches

- Focus on places where people smoke rather than people who smoke. For places where there are many complaints of smoking, increase signage and other efforts.
- Some hospitals created palm cards that they give to people violating their outdoor no-smoking policies. This is a non-confrontational way to deliver a simple no-smoking message as well as information on how to quit. These could be distributed by staff or resident ambassadors. A person who smokes may be more receptive to a message delivered in this manner.



They're smoking outside, in the courtyard, in the staircase, in the hallway, in front of your door, even though it's not their door and the hallway's clouded full of smoke.<sup>8</sup>



Yes, it says 'No Smoking', but people stand in front of your door to smoke, and that smoke gets inside your apartment, so you suffer. I have allergies.<sup>9</sup>

# Other issues

NYCHA residents consistently shared that exposure to marijuana smoke was a persistent and related issue that must be addressed along with exposure to tobacco smoke. Since Marijuana is currently illegal, neither HUD nor NYCHA will directly address it through policy. However, many residents feel that secondhand marijuana smoke is a nuisance (in some cases more of a nuisance than cigarette smoke). Conversely, residents are extremely wary of enforcement strategies that include police. Therefore, the Advisory Group recommended that marijuana be incorporated into self-enforcement strategies for Smoke-Free NYCHA, including education and communications.

## Incorporate marijuana into self-enforcement strategies for Smoke-Free NYCHA

- Facilitate community dialogue about marijuana
- Provide education on the health hazards associated with marijuana smoking
- Explore resources for marijuana cessation support
- Use broad language to describe “no smoking” rules that can be interpreted to include marijuana

# Conclusion & Next Steps

NYCHA, the largest residential landlord in New York City, is home to 1 in 14 New Yorkers. On July 30, 2018, it will have the broadest smoke-free public housing policy in the country. Implementation will be an ongoing process, requiring support from residents, staff, leadership, and partners in government, City agencies, and non-profits. The strategies in this document offer a path forward for a transparent, accountable, and responsive process to implement Smoke-Free NYCHA – because we all share the air.

# Commitments & Progress to date

NYCHA and partner organizations have made significant progress ahead of the launch of Smoke-Free NYCHA on July 30, 2018. The achievements below demonstrate the commitment of NYCHA, and partners, to ensure a supportive and successful implementation.

## Ongoing Activities

Who	What
NYCHA	Publish and distribute a Fact Sheet and a two page overview of Smoke-Free NYCHA, connections to health, and the engagement process to date.
NYCHA	Develop and implement multi-layered education and training for NYCHA staff.
DOHMH	Create and distribute a palmcard describing the new policy, health risks of secondhand smoke, and cessation resources (including the NY State Smokers’ Quitline).
NYCHA/DOHMH	Engage residents in meetings and activities to solicit their input and feedback on the development and implementation of Smoke-Free NYCHA.

## 2017

Who	What
DOHMH/NYU Langone	Convene Community Health Workers who work with NYCHA residents and train them to serve as Peer Navigators to support cessation.
DOHMH	Deploy a media campaign about the benefits of smoke-free housing (not NYCHA-specific) and the dangers of secondhand smoke.
NYCHA/DOHMH/Public Health Solutions NYC Smoke-free	Participate in Family Days by sharing information and soliciting feedback and ideas about Smoke-Free NYCHA.

## 2018 (Completed & Forthcoming)

DOHMH	Work with community partners with a presence in NYCHA developments to support outreach to residents on Smoke-Free NYCHA.
NYCHA	Publish articles in NYCHA Journal about Smoke-Free NYCHA, describing the initiative and community engagement process to date.
DOHMH	Community Health Workers from the Harlem Health Advocacy Program use the American Lung Association's Freedom from Smoking curriculum to offer cessation support to NYCHA residents in five East Harlem developments.
NYCHA	Create and post a webpage with information about Smoke-Free NYCHA, connections to health, and the engagement process to date.

## 2018 (Completed & Forthcoming)

Who	What
NYCHA	Post notice of the proposed lease amendment in all developments.
NYCHA	Mail lease amendments.
NYCHA/DOHMH	Host a Facebook Live event with staff from NYCHA and DOHMH, and NYCHA resident leaders.
PHS/NYC Smoke-Free	Work with young people from NYCHA's Youth Leadership Councils to create short videos about Smoke-Free NYCHA and to promote them on social media.
PHS/NYC Smoke-Free	Conduct a media campaign about the benefits of smoke-free housing (not NYCHA-specific) with health equity framework encouraging the adoption of Smoke-Free policies.
DOHMH	Conduct the "Clean Air Survey" to assess issues around air quality (including secondhand smoke) at NYCHA.
NYU Langone School of Health	Assess indoor air quality (PM2.5, nicotine levels) in common areas and apartments in NYCHA pre- and post implementation.
NYCHA	Install no smoking signage at all NYCHA developments that include information about how to report a violation, and how to access cessation resources.

## Endnotes

- 1 Shelley D, Jiang N, Lee KT, Chun S, Kaplan S. Attitudes Towards HUD'S Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule: Findings from Focus Groups Among NYCHA Residents. Unpublished Report. November, 2017
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Farley SM, Schroth KRJ, Johnson Curtis C, Angell S. Evidence of Support for Smoke-Free Public Housing Among New York City Residents. Public Health Rep 2016 Jan-Feb; 131 (1): 2-3
- 4 Smoke-Free At 830 Amsterdam. NYCHA Journal, August, 2015. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/august-2015-english-journal.pdf>
- 5 Pizacani BA, Maher JE, Rohde K, Drach L, Stark MJ. Implementation of a Smoke-Free Policy in Subsidized Multiunit Housing: Effects on Smoking Cessation and Second hand Smoke Exposure, Nicotine & Tobacco Research, Volume 14, Issue 9, 1 September 2012, Pages 1027–1034, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntr334>
- 6 Resident Comment during Community Engagement Meeting, 2017
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Shelley D, Jiang N, Lee KT, Chun S, Kaplan S. Attitudes Towards HUD'S Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule: Findings from Focus Groups Among NYCHA Residents. Unpublished Report. November, 2017
- 9 Ibid