

Comprehensive Tobacco-Free Head Start Policy: Why It Matters

All Oregon Head Start Pre-Kindergarten programs are adopting and implementing tobacco-free policies that meet or exceed new [state requirements](#) effective January 1, 2009. The new policy issued by ODE was developed through a collaborative partnership involving the American Lung Association of Oregon (ALAO), the Oregon Head Start Association (OHSA), and the Oregon Public Health Division Tobacco Prevention and Education Program.

A good comprehensive tobacco-free school policy for Head Start programs deters individual tobacco use and benefits the entire community by:

- creating a healthier environment, reinforcing tobacco-free norms and attitudes that help prevent kids from later starting to smoke;
- reducing exposure to secondhand smoke;
- decreasing current consumption of tobacco by Head Start staff and family members, and helping people quit; and
- protecting children and families from tobacco company influences.

THE BOTTOM LINE: A comprehensive tobacco-free school policy, applied fairly and consistently, reduces tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure.

ALAO and OHSA provide have developed “Tobacco-Free Environment” model policy language. [Most Head Start programs in Oregon are adopting policies exceeding the state-required minimum standards.](#)

ALAO and in some cases local county health departments are offering assistance to Head Start programs as they adopt, implement, and communicate their comprehensive tobacco-free policies. ALAO analyzes and provides feedback on Head Start policies submitted, maintains a statewide database with details of these policies, and orders tobacco-free signs and stickers for Head Starts with tobacco-free policies.

Contact the American Lung Association of Oregon to learn more about Head Start tobacco-free policy or to order tobacco-free signs:

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