



SMOKE-FREE POLICY

The Impact of Smoking

The Department of Health and Families (DHF) recognises the extreme, negative health impact that tobacco smoke, including environmental tobacco smoke, has on all people exposed to it.

Tobacco smoking increases the risk of cancers, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and other illnesses. It is the greatest single risk factor for health and has been estimated to cause 10 per cent of the total Australian burden of diseaseⁱ; 12.5 per cent for Aboriginal Australiansⁱⁱ.

In the Northern Territory (NT) between 1986-1995, nearly 20 per cent of adult deaths have been directly attributed to smokingⁱⁱⁱ.

Smoking tobacco not only increases risk of serious illness to the individual smoking, but also to other adults and children exposed to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). "Scientific evidence has firmly established that there is no safe level of exposure to [ETS]"^{iv}.

During 2004/05 it was estimated that over 52 per cent of Aboriginal adults (18 years and over) and over 30 per cent of non-Aboriginal adults in the NT were smokers. The highest prevalence of smoking was recorded for Aboriginal males with a rate of over 62 per cent^v.

Nationally there has been a marked decline in smoking rates from 24.3 per cent of the population aged 14 or older reporting smoking daily in 1991 to 16.6 per cent in 2007^{vi}. Reductions were also achieved amongst the NT's urban (predominantly non-Aboriginal) population between the late 70's to the mid 1990's, however since that time smoking rates appear to have changed little^{vii}.

From the mid 1990's there have been significant increases in apparent smoking rates amongst Aboriginal peoples across the NT^{viii}.

Policy Intent

The DHF Smoke Free Policy has been developed to protect and promote the best health outcomes for its staff and for the patients and clients of our services. The Policy has been developed to:

- Safeguard our staff against the health impacts of tobacco smoke, including environmental tobacco smoke.
- Protect those who use our services and visit our facilities.
- Promote an attitudinal and behavioural change to smoking.
- Encourage and support staff and clients to quit smoking through cessation services and programs.
- Ensure compliance with the *Tobacco Control Act* and Workplace Health and Safety requirements.

Policy Statement

A Smoke Free policy applies to all Departmental services, facilities, vehicles and grounds.

The policy extends to all Department of Health and Families' staff, contractors, volunteers, patients, clients and visitors across the Northern Territory while they are providing or accessing Departmental services. Exceptions may apply on hospital campuses, or as otherwise approved by the Chief Health Officer, under specific arrangements.

Options and opportunities to quit smoking will be made available to staff, clients and patients across Departmental services.

The Policy is supported by an Implementation Plan that can be found at

www.health.nt.gov.au/Alcohol_and_Other_Drugs/Tobacco

What it means for staff

Staff are not permitted to smoke anywhere on Departmental premises, facilities or vehicles nor whilst working off-site.

Staff may smoke only during official breaks and must leave DHF grounds to do so. This is consistent with staff employment contracts and conditions, which do not include smoking breaks.

Managers and Supervisors are responsible for encouraging compliance with the policy and are required to remind staff of their occupational health and safety (OH&S) obligations. OH&S information can be viewed from the DHF home page. Non-compliance with the policy by staff can result in disciplinary action.

Volunteers, contractors and students/researchers are also required to comply with this policy as it is a condition of volunteer service, service contracts and agreements, and study / research-related activities.

The Department actively encourages and supports staff to quit smoking, through various free-of-charge smoking cessation programs, which may include nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and other medications. Advice for managers and staff on cessation options are available on

www.health.nt.gov.au/Alcohol_and_Other_Drugs/Tobacco

Staff living in DHF accommodation are required to comply with the DHF smoke-free policy, however they are able to smoke outdoors, preferably out of public view, on their accommodation site outside of their official work hours.

What it means for Patients and Clients

Patients and clients of the DHF will receive information that DHF services and premises are smoke-free through a range of communication strategies, including printed literature and advice from service providers.

Inpatients, outpatients and community based patients and clients are encouraged to discuss their tobacco use prior to admission where they will be offered support to cease smoking through counselling and, where warranted and clinically appropriate, NRT or other medication. These will be provided free of charge to patients during their hospital stay. Patients are also supported to undertake smoking cessation programs following discharge.

Hospital campuses may provide designated outdoor smoking areas for patients of the DHF who are unable or unwilling to quit smoking. Smoking may only take place in these designated outdoor smoking areas. Patients are not permitted to smoke elsewhere on hospital and health centre grounds, buildings or in Departmental vehicles.

Patients are also requested to not smoke when receiving services from visiting Departmental personnel. Staff conducting patient or client visits in the community can decline to service a patient or client who refuses to cease smoking during a staff visit. This visit may then be reprioritised against other community visits.

Patient and Client Smoking Areas

Where appropriate, a Northern Territory hospital campus may provide up to two designated outdoor smoking areas for patients. Smoking areas must comply with the designated outdoor smoking area guidelines, which include:

- be in an outdoor area with a maximum of two walls or screens.
- be out of line of sight from any main entrances to the hospital;
- comply with tobacco control legislation;
- prohibit the consumption of food and drink within the designated area;
- display signage: indicating that the area is designated for smoking; indicating food and drink are not to be consumed within the designated outdoor smoking area; promoting Quit that includes the Quit line number.

Basic amenities such as seating for people with poor mobility and a cover for rain and or sun can be provided in the smoking area.

Staff may assist a person with mobility problems to access a designated outdoor smoking area. Staff may however, decline to offer assistance to avoid exposure to ETS, or designate this assistance as a low priority against other duties.

What it means for visitors

People visiting staff, patients or clients are not permitted to smoke on any hospital or health centre including on any part of the grounds, carpark, and buildings surrounds; or in Departmental vehicles.

Visitors who breach this rule are asked to comply and, should they refuse, may be asked to leave the premises.

What it means for the Department

The DHF is serious about supporting staff, patients and clients to quit smoking.

By supporting staff to quit smoking, the Department will be contributing to improved health outcomes, improved quality of life and improved productivity for staff who smoke and staff who have previously been exposed to ETS.

By supporting patients and clients to cease smoking, staff exposure to ETS will be minimal and there will be increased positive health outcomes for patients and clients. Smoking areas for hospital patients who are unable to quit will further reduce staff exposure to ETS.

Decreasing staff exposure to tobacco smoke means fewer sick days and increased productivity.

Smoking Cessation Support for DHF Employees

DHF employees can access smoking cessation support. This support will assist staff to deal with the effects of withdrawal from nicotine addiction during working hours and personal time and includes:

- An assessment for nicotine dependence and appropriateness of treatment options.
- An individualised cessation plan to meet the goal of withdrawal from tobacco products.
- Provision of NRT as identified in the employee's cessation plan, paid by the staff member's work-unit.
- Access to DHF provided smoking cessation courses, including release time from work to attend smoking cessation courses or counselling.
- Access to the DHF funded Quitline (137 848).
- Access to smoking cessation support through the Employee Assistance Program.

Smoking Cessation Support for DHF Patients and Clients

Patients and clients, for example clients accessing case-management services or accommodation support from the DHF, are eligible for smoking cessation support that includes:

- An assessment for nicotine dependence and appropriateness of treatment options upon entering the service and brief intervention for tobacco smoking.
- An individualised cessation plan to meet the goal of withdrawal from tobacco products.
- Provision of NRT while residing in hospital, accommodation services or receiving DHF services, as identified in the patient or client's cessation plan.
- 3 days of NRT upon release from hospital, accommodation or respite services.
- Access to smoking cessation courses.
- Access to the DHF funded Quitline (137 848).

Patients and clients staying within hospital or a DHF service for less than one day will be offered brief intervention and NRT for the duration of their stay.

What it means for organisations and providers delivering services on behalf of the Department

The *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2007* requires that workers be protected from environmental hazards and the *Tobacco Control Act 2002* prohibits smoking in enclosed workplaces. The DHF Smoke-free policy extends the smoke-free area to outdoor areas in the workplace.

All agencies delivering services on behalf of the DHF must be reminded of their obligations to provide a smoke-free enclosed workplace within all new service agreements or contracts by July 2010. Service agreements and contracts between external agencies and the DHF will also stipulate that outdoor areas of these agencies must be smoke-free. The DHF will support all external agencies to meet their smoke-free obligations through information and resource provision.

Promotion and Communication

This policy will be promoted throughout the DHF workforce and will be included in orientation for new staff.

DHF premises have clear signs to advise where smoking prohibitions are in force (and, if available, any exempt areas for patients and clients).

This policy is available to staff, clients and visitors at all Departmental facilities and on the Internet.

All DHF contract managers must ensure that service arrangements for all organisations and services funded by the Department specify the Smoke Free Policy requirements and request a copy of the agency's smoke-free policy as an annual reporting requirement.

Definitions

Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS)

ETS is the combination of smoke emitted from the burning end of a cigarette or other tobacco products and smoke exhaled by the smoker. ETS contains thousands of chemicals, at least 250 of which are known to be carcinogenic or otherwise toxic^{iv}.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

NRT is a pharmacotherapy used to manage the symptoms of nicotine dependence and withdrawal by replacing nicotine formerly obtained from tobacco. Various NRT products are available, including transdermal patches, lozenges, sublingual tablets, gum and inhalers.

Contractor

For the purposes of this policy, a contractor is a person who is a natural person who is not an employee of DHF and who carries out duties on behalf of DHF on DHF premises. Examples include electricians, plumbers and builders.

ⁱ NT Department of Health and Community Services, Health Gains Planning, *Smoking in the Northern Territory*
http://digitallibrary.health.nt.gov.au/dspace/bitstream/10137/65/1/hgains_factsheet_smoking.pdf

ⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2008*
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10583>

ⁱⁱⁱ NT Department of Health and Community Services op sit

^{iv} World Health Organisation *Protection from exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. Policy recommendations 2007*
http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/2007/who_protection_exposure_final_25June2007.pdf

^v NT Department of Health and Community Services op sit

^{vi} Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, First Results*
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10579>

^{vii} NT Department of Health and Community Services op sit

^{viii} NT Department of Health and Community Services op sit