

B. Background on Tobacco Smoke Exposure

Published in 2010, *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General*¹ confirms that there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke, detailing the specific pathways by which it damages the human body. The scientific evidence supports the following conclusions:

- There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Any exposure to tobacco smoke – even an occasional cigarette or exposure to secondhand smoke – is harmful. Damage from tobacco smoke is immediate. Cigarette smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals and compounds. Hundreds are toxic and at least 69 cause cancer. Tobacco smoke itself is a known human carcinogen.
- Chemicals in tobacco smoke reach the lungs every time the smoker inhales; the blood then carries the toxins to every organ in the body. The damage includes damage to DNA which can lead to cancer. Nearly one third of all cancer deaths in the U. S. are directly linked to smoking.
- Low levels of smoke exposure, including exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, lead to rapid and sharp increase in dysfunction and inflammation of the lining of the blood vessels, which are implicated in heart attack and stroke.

A recent MMWR article² *Vital Signs: Nonsmoker's Exposure to Secondhand Smoke-United States 1999-2008* analyzed data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey to determine the proportion of the nonsmoking population with serum cotinine (the primary nicotine metabolite) levels ≥ 0.05 ng/mL and to determine whether the household included a person who smoked inside the home. Exposures have declined significantly, most dramatically between 1999 and 2002, but the rate of decline has slowed. During the year 2007-2008 nationally, approximately 88 million non smokers aged ≥ 3 yrs. were exposed and disparities in exposure persist, with children being among the most exposed. The only way to protect nonsmokers is to eliminate all smoking in all indoor spaces.

The report notes that several federal initiatives support efforts to reduce exposure in public places and workplaces. Maine has strong, comprehensive laws that prohibit smoking in these venues, and many businesses and organizations have implemented policies that are even stronger than state law in these venues.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking or Health, 2010.

² MMWR / September 10, 2010 / vol.59 / No.35 pages 1141-1146.

According to Maine's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2009 results 71% of smokers and 83.1% of non-smokers report they are not exposed to secondhand smoke at work, and that 2.5% of smokers and 3.6% of nonsmokers report being exposed to secondhand smoke in their workplace for one hour or less per week.

It is heartening to note that, in Maine, 92% of nonsmokers and over 80% of smokers believe that people should be protected from secondhand smoke. Furthermore, 95.4% of smokers believe that the smoke from other people's cigarettes is either very harmful (50.6%) or somewhat harmful (44.8%).

More than half (54.8%) of smokers do not allow anyone to smoke anywhere in their home; and 88.6% of nonsmokers do not allow anyone to smoke anywhere in their home. While only 4.5% of non-smokers permit smoking anywhere in their home, nearly a fourth (22.8%) of smokers still permit smoking anywhere inside their home.

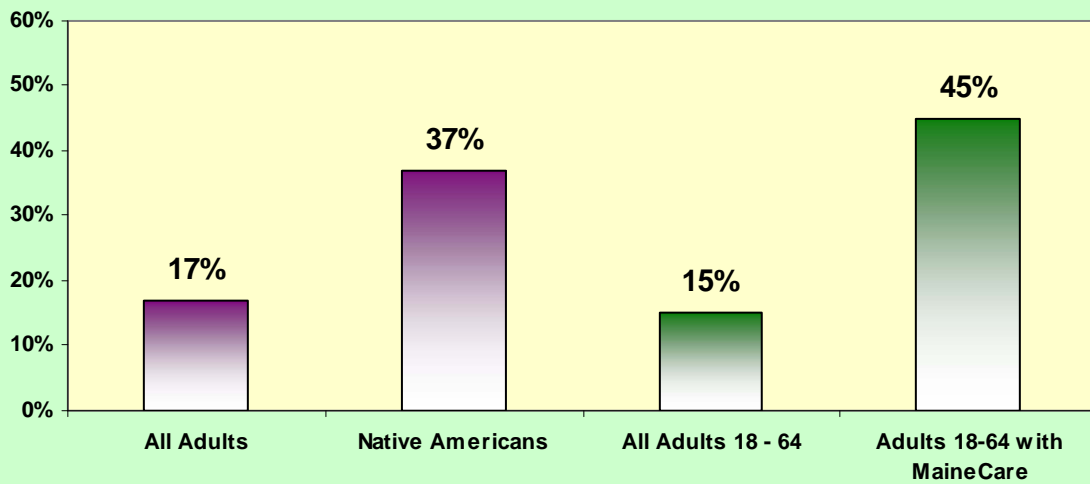
The Surgeon General Reports in 2006 and 2010 on secondhand smoke state that the home is now the predominant location for secondhand smoke exposure. Mainers spend a lot of time in their homes, especially in the long Maine winter. BRFSS 2009 documents that 89.2% of smokers and 93.5% of non-smokers spend over 8 hours a day in their home, and that 45% of all Mainers average 9-12 hours in their home.

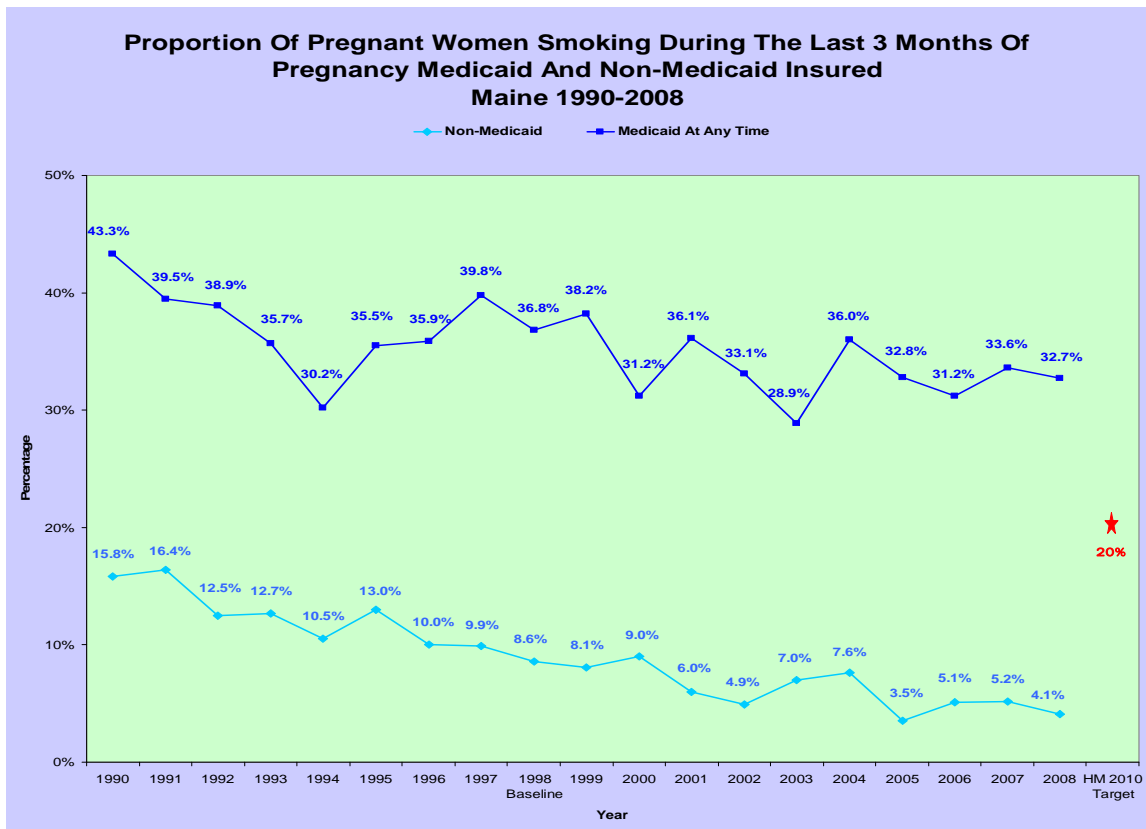
As noted in the Foreword to *Children and Secondhand Smoke Exposure: Excerpts from The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*³ "Children are more heavily exposed to secondhand smoke than adults. Almost 60% of U.S. children aged 3-11 years, or almost 22 million children, are exposed to secondhand smoke." Children whose parents smoke and who grow up in homes where smoking is allowed are also more likely to become smokers themselves. According to the 2008 Maine Youth Tobacco Survey among middle school students who smoke, 71.4% live with someone who smokes.

The following two charts demonstrate some profound tobacco related health disparities related to income. The charts are specific to MaineCare recipients and their smoking rates, and demonstrate why as a priority, we have first sought to support the voluntary adoption of smoke free policies by public housing administrators for units under their control. Please note that while the smoking rate for pregnant women in Maine is 1 in 25; for those low income pregnant women with MaineCare insurance 1 in every 3 is a smoker. Our efforts to promote smoke free housing through voluntary policies have been concentrated within multiunit public and subsidized housing to specifically reach our intended audience of low income families.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Service. *Children and Secondhand Smoke Exposure: Excerpts from The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2007.

Maine Adult Smoking Rates





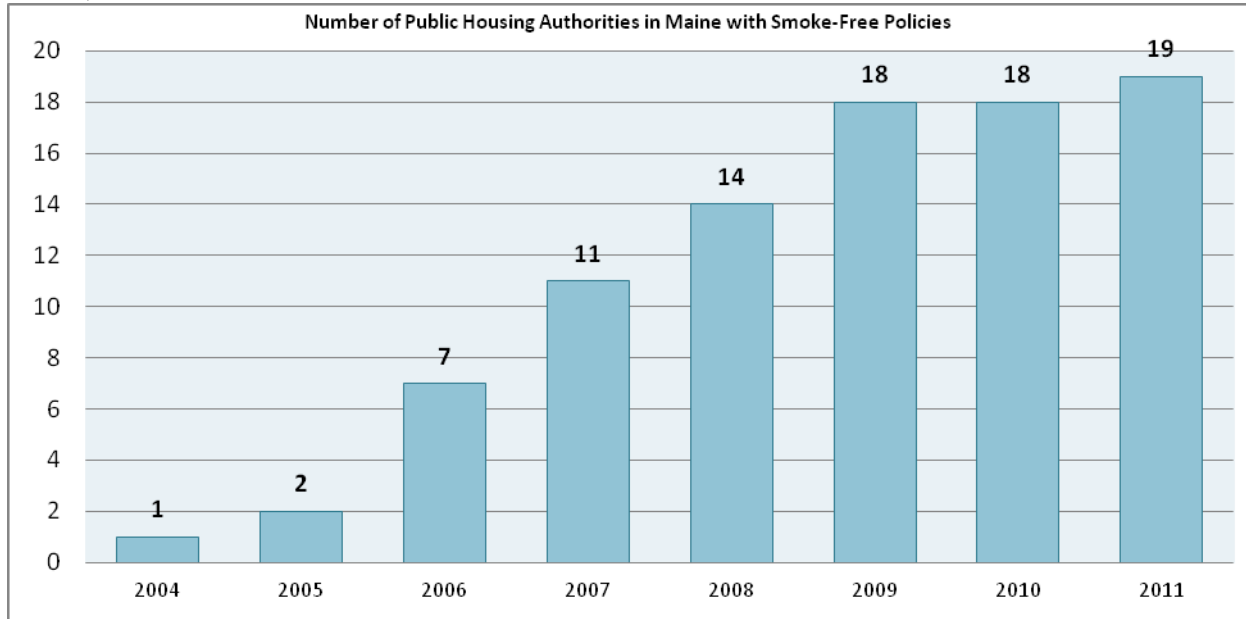
Efforts to address secondhand smoke exposure in multi-unit rental housing:

Maine’s efforts began in 2002, when the calls started coming in to local Healthy Maine Partnerships and the state’s tobacco control and prevention program requesting help in addressing involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke in rental housing. It quickly became apparent that there were virtually no resources, no clear information about the legality of smoke-free policies in housing and apparently little being done, neither nationally nor locally to address this significant public health issue.

The mission of the Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine is to protect residents in multi-unit housing from involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke. When the work of the Coalition started in 2003, surveying was done to gauge interest among tenants and landlords regarding the opportunity to choose smoke-free housing. Tenants from four Public Housing Authorities were asked ‘if available, would you prefer to live in a smoke-free environment?’ Results showed that at least 74% of tenants, both smokers and nonsmokers, would chose to be in housing that is smoke-free. Many landlords were not aware that smoke-free policies were legal and justified; only 40% of landlords surveyed

in three counties knew they could adopt a policy. Materials to educate landlords about their rights to adopt smoke-free policies and positive effects of doing so were created.

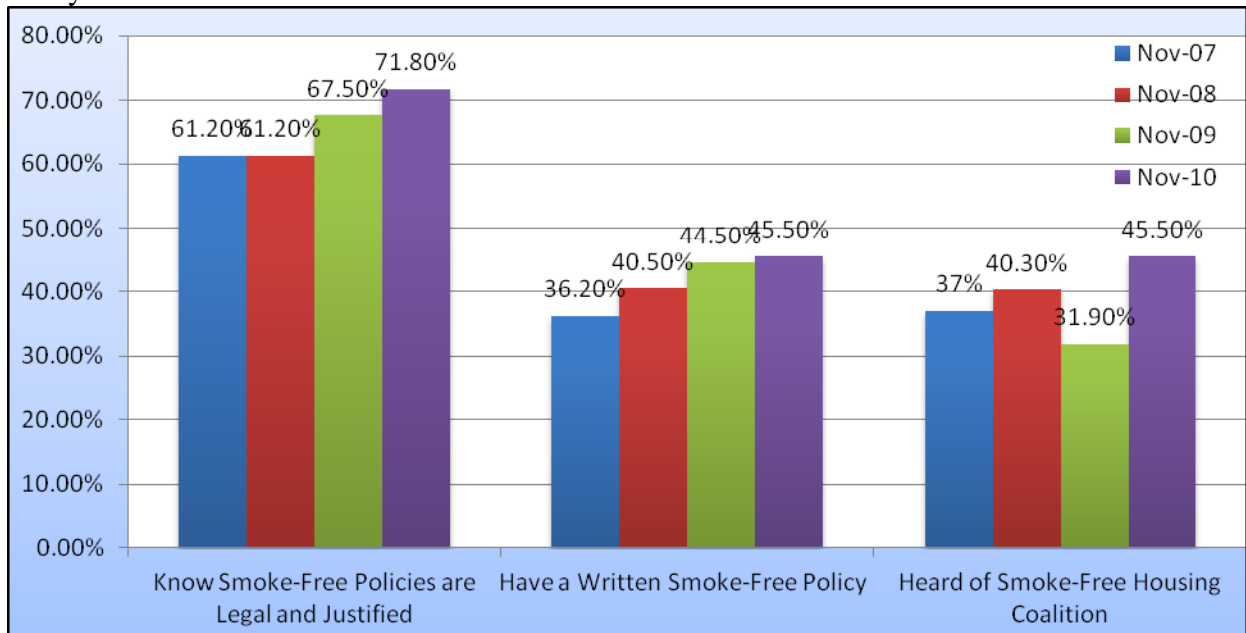
Understanding that Mainers with a lower socioeconomic status have higher smoking rates and more limited housing options, the Coalition first targeted Public Housing Authorities and subsidized housing property managers and landlords with smoke-free housing messages. In 2004, Auburn Housing Authority adopted a smoke-free policy becoming the first Public Housing Authority (PHA) in Maine and the fifth in the nation to do so. Since then, 19 of Maine's 20 PHAs have adopted smoke-free policies, protecting more than 9,000 residents from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.



Maine has become a recognized leader with 95% of Maine's Public Housing Authorities having smoke-free policies; whereas less than 10% of all public housing nationally have adopted such policies. Support and encouragement for these public housing efforts has come locally from MaineHousing (formerly called Maine State Housing Authority) and nationally from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In July 2009, HUD released a notice endorsing the adoption of smoke-free housing policies by Public Housing Authorities. This notice and the September 2010 notice encouraging subsidized housing, including Section 8 properties, to adopt smoke-free policies have helped to remove landlord and property manager concerns about the legality of these policies. There are no legal barriers to enacting a smoke-free policy at the local, state or federal level. Educating landlords and property managers about their legal rights and other factors that make smoke-free housing more favorable – including that it is considerable less expensive to maintain, reduced fire danger and providing a healthier environment for tenants – have lead to an increase in the percentage of multi-unit housing in Maine that is smoke-free.

Starting in 2007, the Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine has conducted an annual automated phone survey of private landlords to learn more about their awareness and adoption of smoke-free policies. The first of the three questions asks landlords if they

know that it is legal in Maine to have a smoke-free policy as part of their lease. The percentage of landlords aware of their right to adopt a smoke-free policy has increased annually to 71.8% in 2010; this is a substantial increase from the initial Coalition survey in 2003 where only 40% of landlords knew that these policies were legal. This annual survey also asks landlords whether or not they have a written smoke-free policy. 45.5% of respondents in 2010 have adopted a smoke-free policy for at least one of their buildings; this is a 25.7% increase in the number of policies from the 2007 baseline survey.



In addition to the private landlords that have adopted policies, many of the large property management companies across Maine have made their properties smoke-free. The Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine is continuing to promote voluntary policy change to help meet the tenant demand for smoke-free housing. Starting in 2007, the Coalition’s website, www.smokefreeforme.org, housed a free housing registry to connect tenants with properties that were smoke-free. In 2010, the Coalition decided to merge its registry with MaineHousing’s comprehensive housing registry www.MaineHousingSearch.org. The two agencies worked closely to enhance the service by adding smoke-free specific listing categories and icons, smoke-free housing resources, and information for landlords on how to adopt and enforce smoke-free policies. Housing seekers in Maine now have a free, up-to-date, comprehensive housing search tool that can be filtered for smoke-free housing.

The Coalition’s concentration on working with public housing and subsidized housing has been a deliberate effort to positively impact the lives of children and families in Maine. In addition to those stated above, smoke-free housing successes in our state include:

- Maine had the first tribal housing authority in the nation implement a smoke-free policy.

- We were the second state in the nation to pass a 1-point incentive in our State Housing Authority Qualified Allocation Plan for those applicants with 100% smoke-free policies.
- We are the only state in the nation to have a smoke-free housing video which features our then Attorney General Steve Rowe making a clear statement that smoke-free housing policies are legal and justified.
- Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine was the first to publish costs of unit turnover in units allowing smoking versus units which do not. Costs in units allowing smoking are two to five times as expensive as those which do not.
- We have been referenced and cited in many publications on smoke-free housing and secondhand smoking including the landmark U.S. Surgeon General report of 2006.

Because of consistency of messaging, good marketing strategies, knowledge/expertise and a broad coalition of partners, huge normative changes have been made in Maine – smoke-free housing is becoming the norm, not the exception. Our goal remains to have the supply of smoke-free housing equal demand.