

# Tips for Conducting a Policymaker Assessment

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## **Why conduct a Policymaker Assessment:**

- To gauge where local elected officials (or Board of Health members) stand on smoke-free policies (often done in preparation for and during the legislative phase of a campaign).
- To develop rapport and positive relationships with policymakers.
- To build trust, credibility, and respect with policymakers.
- To develop and implement a targeted policymaker education plan.

## **When conducting a Policymaker Assessment:**

- Make the assessment conversational. Use your own words and proceed as far as you can with each question. Listen and use follow up questions or prompts to get the most information.
- Make this an opportunity to gather information rather than to educate or debate.
- Conduct the policymaker assessment in person and not through email.
- If the policymaker does not agree with your views, listen carefully, ask questions, and do not engage in a debate with them during the assessment.

## **Make sure the policymaker knows:**

- You want their opinion (there is no right or wrong answer).
- The results of the assessment are confidential. The results will be used within the coalition but they will not be shared with the media or the general public.
- If it is an election year, be sure each candidate knows that the results will not be used to endorse a candidate; instead they will be used within the coalition to help guide the smoke-free campaign.

## **When the assessment is completed:**

- Let the policymaker know that you will follow up with additional secondhand smoke/smoke-free policy information.
- Provide contact information and let them know you are available to answer questions and discuss the issue at a later date.
- You do not have to know all the answers; just promise to get back to them with the information they request or need.
- Summarize the results for your coalition in terms of those who support, oppose, or are 'on the fence.' Include specific information needed by each policymaker to correct misperceptions.

*For more information, contact the Kentucky Center for Smoke-free Policy  
University of Kentucky College of Nursing. 859-323-4587 or [www.kcsp.uky.edu](http://www.kcsp.uky.edu)*

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## Basic questions to ask during the Policymaker Assessment:

- In your opinion, how serious a health risk is secondhand smoke to those who must breathe it?
- How important do you think it is for **workers** to breathe smoke-free air where they work?
- How important do you think it is for **the public** to breathe smoke-free air in public places?
- In your opinion, how important is it to pass a smoke-free ordinance/regulation in X city or county?
- In your opinion, how feasible would it be to pass a smoke-free ordinance/regulation in X city or county?
- How supportive are you of a smoke-free ordinance?
- If exemptions were proposed, would you support a policy that does not protect all workers? (Examples: exemptions for bars, tobacco retailers, private clubs, or for businesses with separate smoking rooms)
- How do you think a smoke-free ordinance would affect your community?
- Of the smokers you know, how many already go outside to smoke at work or in public places?
- Have you or your family members ever grown tobacco?
  - If yes, in what ways (if any) do you think a smoke-free ordinance would affect farmers?
- Are there other issues related to smoke-free laws that we should know?

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