



Tips on Dealing with Smoking For Residence Assistants

As residence assistants, the job you serve within the college community is of the utmost importance. You not only enforce university policies to create safer and healthier living environments, but you are a role model to your residents. In the fight against tobacco and its use, you have the opportunity to be the best resource for your residents by offering information and support. The following tips should help you become this resource.

Know your school's smoking policy

This sounds like a given, but it's not. If a school allows indoor smoking, it probably states where smoking is allowed and where it's not. Students who smoke will often break the rules because they think no one is paying attention. It's your job to pay attention. If you see ashes in a stairwell where smoking is forbidden, people are smoking there and it is your job to do something about it.

Know Your School's Resources – and make residents aware of them!

You should know what your school has to offer students who want to quit smoking, and you should let your residents know from day one that these resources are available. If there are support groups, know when they meet (or know how to find out). If there is a tobacco treatment specialist in the health center, know his or her name and contact information.

Health Comes First

Smoke travels. If your school has dormitories that allow smoking in some rooms but not in others, there is a large chance that the smoke in the smoking rooms will bother people in the non-smoking rooms. When a situation like this arises, it is imperative that you support the person who has the problem with the smoke. Secondhand smoke is a known carcinogen, and no one should be subjected to it unwillingly.

Smoking is a Fire Hazard

The National Fire Protection Association calls smoking materials “the number one cause of civilian fire deaths.” The temperature of the center of the tip a lit cigarette is about 1112 degrees Fahrenheit. When people smoke indoors, they must take extra precautions to avoid fires.

- Alcohol consumption makes people more careless with how they dispose of smoking materials.
- Proper ashtrays must be used. Using a wastebasket as an ashtray increases the fire risk.
- Sometimes people will cover or disable smoke detectors in order to smoke in places where smoking is prohibited. If a fire were to break out, it may go undetected until it is too late. Check smoke detectors often to make sure they are in working order.

Avoid Smokers’ Rights Debates

Discussing smokers’ rights diverts attention from promoting a living environment that is healthy and safe for all students. Instead, engage in discussions about the rights of non-smokers to live free from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. (See *Health Comes First* above)

Set an Example

Whether they will admit it or not, your residents look up to you. If they see you breaking the rules, they will see it as a sign that it’s ok for them to break the rules too.

Ask for Help

If you feel that a situation is out of hand, talk to your superiors or other residence assistants.

The American Cancer Society is here to help you too! If you want more information about the dangers of college smoking and what you can do to help decrease it, contact Kathy O’Connor at (800) 952-7664, ext. 4690.