



REACHING OUT TO THE MULTI-UNIT HOUSING INDUSTRY

PURPOSE

Getting your message to property managers

OUTCOMES

- Identify and meet with organizations that work with multi-unit housing
- Attend multi-unit housing conferences
- Conduct mailings, training sessions, and other strategies
- Use earned and paid media
- Work with non-traditional industries such as green, insurance, and rental search companies

WHY FOCUS ON THE HOUSING INDUSTRY?

Most smoke-free multi-housing programs work directly with building owners and managers because that strategy can affect positive change faster than working with individual renters.

By focusing your message and outreach efforts on owners, managers, developers, and other industry professionals, you communicate directly with the people who can make the decision to adopt a smoke-free policy.

Because of targeted educational efforts by the tobacco control community in the past few years, many of these decision makers are already asking for information on smoke-free policies. Housing trade publications and associations report that smoke-free policies are a “hot topic”¹ among their members and many smoke-free multi-housing professionals have seen an increase in the number of invitations to give presentations and requests for materials.

Remember that property managers and others working in the housing industry are business-people. When creating your outreach strategies, think about what kinds of messages and materials will appeal to their business-oriented—and profit-minded—ways of thinking. Messages that focus on the cost savings associated with operating a smoke-free building and the potential to attract new renters resonate with managers much more than messages about the health risks of secondhand smoke exposure. The talking points that would persuade you as a smoke-free housing professional might not be the talking points that would persuade housing industry professionals. For more on creating messages and materials for the housing industry, read Chapters 1 and 3, “The Case for Smoke-Free Housing” and “Building Your Smoke-Free Housing Program.”

IDENTIFYING LOCAL HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS

Building relationships with housing organizations can yield leads that will allow you to reach out to managers. Trade organizations, housing finance agencies, and nonprofit agencies can all help to further your work.

KEY TERMS:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS (NAHRO): *A housing trade association targeted toward providers of public and low-income housing.*

NATIONAL APARTMENT ASSOCIATION (NAA): *A housing trade association targeted toward providers of market-rate and privately owned housing.*

NATIONAL MULTI-HOUSING COUNCIL (NMHC): *NMHC is a trade association representing apartment owners, managers, developers, lenders, and service providers.*

LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED): *An internationally-recognized green building program that certifies green buildings through a ranking system.*

LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT QUALIFIED ALLOCATION PLAN (LIHTC QAP): *LIHTC is the largest source of federal subsidy for adding rental housing units to the affordable housing stock in the United States. The QAP is a required plan for how each state should distribute its LIHTC credits.*

HOUSING FINANCE AGENCIES: *Housing finance agencies provide funding for loans, subsidy programs, renovations, and low-income housing tax credits.*

i *Trade organizations:*

Local trade organizations such as apartment associations and chapters of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) work at the city, county, regional, or state level. Your smoke-free multi-housing program may be able to become a member of these local organizations. Although becoming a member may cost money in the form of annual dues, members may enjoy many benefits that would be useful for your work. Members of housing trade organizations can often purchase membership lists; attend, exhibit, and present information at conferences; and distribute educational resources to other members. By taking advantage of these opportunities, you can become immersed in your local housing industry and direct social norm change among the trade organization's members.

There are national trade organizations, such as the National Apartment Association and NAHRO, but it's unlikely that you will find membership in those organizations as useful as membership in your local organizations. Reaching building managers and influencing policy change in your

community is more attainable when you join a local or state trade organization.

Housing finance agencies

Housing finance agencies provide funding for loans, subsidy programs, renovations, and low-income housing tax credits. Housing finance agency staff might be responsible for working with the managers of several different properties and may be in touch with those managers frequently. Because of their connections, staff may also be very knowledgeable about what's going on in your local housing industry. Capitalize on these resources by inquiring about how you can get your message out to more industry professionals. Additionally, educate the housing finance agency staff about your program so that they can refer managers to you.

Housing finance agencies often manage a state's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP)—the points-based application that outlines how multi-unit housing owners and developers can receive the tax credits. Housing finance agencies might be

POTENTIAL NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIPS:

Homelessness Coalitions
 Legal Aid
 Corporations for Supportive Housing
 Community Development Agencies
 Faith-Based Organizations



willing to offer points on the QAP for buildings that are smoke free. Offering a point on a QAP for their low-income housing tax credit program if buildings are smoke free can be easy for housing finance agencies to do. Meet with your state's housing finance agency to learn about the LIHTC and your state's QAP. For more information on working with smoke-free policies and low-income housing tax credits, read about public policy strategies in Chapter 9, "Cultivating Program Sustainability."



Nonprofit agencies

Multi-unit housing touches many populations in every community. Because of this, many nonprofit agencies have focused their efforts to work with multi-unit housing managers and renters who serve specific populations (e.g. seniors, new immigrants, etc.). You can appeal to local nonprofits by sharing in a mission to provide safe and healthy housing to everyone. Learn how these nonprofit agencies conduct outreach to manag-

CASE STUDY:

PARTNERING WITH THE HOUSING INDUSTRY IN MINNESOTA

In 2007, Live Smoke Free became an active member in Minnesota's major housing trade organizations. Although annual fees average around \$500 for each organization, membership in these associations helps Live Smoke Free conduct outreach all year.

As a member of the Minnesota Multi-Housing Association, Live Smoke Free has been able to:

- Reach nearly 2,100 members representing more than 250,000 rental housing units, as well as over 1,500 professional common interest community (CIC) managers and homeowner association board members, representing over 100,000 multi-housing units;
- Give presentations on the benefits of smoke-free housing at annual conferences;
- Exhibit at trade show booths and distribute information about smoke-free housing;
- Serve on the Public Relations Committee to build relationships and advocate for the inclusion of smoke-free policy-related messages in the Association's work;
- Write articles for The Advocate, the trade publication sent to members; and
- Post our smoke-free lease addendum on the Association's web site as another way for members to access that resource.

As a member of the Minnesota Chapter of NAHRO, Live Smoke Free has been able to:

- Reach over 600 members specifically managing public and/or affordable housing;
- Give presentations on the benefits of smoke-free housing at annual conferences; and
- Exhibit at trade show booths and distribute information about smoke-free housing.

CASE STUDY:

LESSONS LEARNED WITH LUNCH & LEARNS

A Lunch & Learn is an educational session where attendees are offered a meal (attendees can have lunch while they learn about a topic!). Live Smoke Free typically hosts 4-8 Lunch & Learn sessions for property managers each year. Here are some key lessons that we've learned while hosting these educational sessions:

- Lunch seems to be an optimal time of day for property managers. It's a time when they would likely take a break from their work anyway so they feel more comfortable about being away from their desk.
- One and a half hours is the maximum length of time for a session. Anything longer and people will feel like the session takes up too much of their day. Plan to give a presentation for 45-60 minutes and keep the rest of the time for networking and questions.
- Lunch & Learn sessions can be held almost anywhere! Host the sessions in locations that are convenient for your audience. There are many locations that will allow you to host a meeting for free or for a nominal fee. Community centers and libraries, hotel conference rooms, and party rooms in smoke-free apartment buildings all make great locations for Lunch & Learns.
- Invite managers to a Lunch & Learn using strategies such as postcards and emails. If you will be inviting a large number of people, choose an inexpensive invitation method so that you can still afford to buy food and supplies for the session. At our first Lunch & Learn, we placed invitations into small paper lunch bags and folded the bag around the invitation before mailing. This created a very clever invite, but it was time consuming to prepare and it was expensive to mail.
- Cover the same topics in a Lunch & Learn that you would cover in a conference presentation (read the tip box on "Points to Cover in a Training Session" for ideas). Consider ways to make the session entertaining for your audience. We have used interactive individual response devices that integrate with the presentation and enable attendees to participate in quizzes. We also have at least one guest speaker at every Lunch & Learn. We have partnered with: an attorney at the Public Health Law Center, a representative from our local Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office, managers of smoke-free buildings, and renters. These speakers give portions of our presentations.
- Offering food is an incentive for people to attend your presentation. Many people are busy during the day, but they are grateful to receive a free meal because it shows that you appreciate the time they are giving to you. However, the lunch that you serve doesn't have to be extravagant. Bagels, fruit, pizza, and boxed lunches are all well-received.
- We try to host Lunch & Learns in the spring and fall. We like to offer sessions at multiple times of the year and at multiple locations within a geographic area in order to make attending convenient for everyone.

If hosting an in-person Lunch & Learn doesn't work for your program, you can take many of these lessons and use them to host a webinar instead! We have had some well attended and very successful Lunch & Learns, but we have also had some that were not. For that reason, we continue to try to get presentations at existing multi-unit housing conferences as often as possible since those events are likely to have a guaranteed audience.

ers and renters and get information about your program into their offices and newsletters.

ATTEND MULTI-HOUSING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Many local trade associations host regular conferences and other events for members of the housing industry to gain continuing education.

Attend conferences to learn

Attend workshops and visit exhibit booths. This will give you an opportunity to get to know the leaders in the industry as well as industry lingo, trends, and emerging topics. Observe how speakers deliver their messages; find parallels to smoke-free housing (you may find workshops about radon, mold, and other health issues to be especially useful). Meet people, network, and build relationships! Talk with managers, vendors, and speakers; ask about their work and share information about your program. It may feel uncomfortable at first if you are not familiar with the housing industry, but soon these will be people with whom you have regular contact. As

you introduce yourself and your program, be sure to explain that you are not trying to sell anything, that you are from a nonprofit organization, and that you offer services/resources for free. Managers are used to dealing with vendors who are always trying to sell them something and they might take more time to learn about your program if they know you are different from the other vendors.

Attend conferences to educate

Prior to the conference, connect with the conference organizer to see if there are opportunities to present a workshop or have an exhibit booth on smoke-free multi-unit housing. Those opportunities may only be available to members of the organizing association; if so, ask about the cost and possibility of becoming a member.

If you can present a workshop, consider inviting managers of existing smoke-free buildings, renters who have suffered from secondhand smoke exposure, or industry experts (such as attorneys and engineers) to present with you. Having other speakers can help keep the audience engaged and provide credibility to your message. However, be



POINTS TO COVER IN A TRAINING WORKSHOP:

- Why smoke-free housing is important
- The trend toward smoke-free housing in your area
- Answers to common legal questions
- The steps to adopt a smoke-free policy
- Resources your program offers

CASE STUDY:

THE IMPACT OF WORKING WITH THE HOUSING INDUSTRY

Since Live Smoke Free began to put a heavy emphasis on working with the housing industry in January 2007, our program has reached 2,000+ property managers multiple times through mailings, email blasts, presentations, and one-on-one meetings. We have also connected with many nonprofit agencies and housing-related organizations to further our goals.

These connections and relationships have allowed us to work with 1,000 buildings on smoke-free policy adoption, implementation, and promotion. That includes over 60 public housing authorities. These policies have protected thousands of Minnesota renters from the dangers of secondhand smoke in their homes.

One of our core strategies is to make our program a *part* of the housing industry, rather than appearing as though we are working *against* the industry. We want the industry to know that our program exists to support their efforts to adopt smoke-free policies. We do this by building relationships, by creating policy materials that are business-focused, and by positioning our program as the smoke-free policy experts in the housing industry. In 2008, our efforts were rewarded when we were nominated by a local housing management company for a Minnesota Multi-Housing Association Innovative Vendor award.

Working with renters is an important piece of our work (and is discussed further in Chapter 8, “Working with Renters who are Exposed to Secondhand Smoke”), but we have seen the greatest impact and success by working directly with the housing industry.

sure that you work with your guest presenters ahead of time so you are sure that the message they will give is one you want the audience to hear.

You may not have success getting a presentation the first time you ask for one because some conference organizers want to know more about your program before allowing you to speak with their members. Tell the conference organizer about your program and make assurances that you will focus on educating the audience and not selling your services. If you can’t get a presentation the first year, ask if you can be notified when requests for presentation topics are released the next year.

If there are no housing conferences in your area, or if you can’t get a presentation right away, consider hosting your own webinar, workshop, or “Lunch & Learn” session (see case study above). Coordinating your own session allows you to control the date/time, presentation length, location, and invitees. Coordinating your own session also keeps the focus on smoke-free housing. However, it may take more time, money, and effort than tapping into an existing conference. You will likely have to use a few strategies to invite and remind people to attend; you will have to coordinate logistics like registration and location; and you may have to pay for food (more people may attend if they know they can get a free lunch!).

MAILINGS

Conducting in-person outreach is always beneficial because many managers appreciate the personal communication and getting to know you. However, connecting with everyone face-to-face or over the phone is not always possible. You may want to mail information to managers in order to reach a large audience.

Ideas for mailings

- Introductory letters that educate on the benefits of smoke-free housing and promote your services;
- Testimonial letters or flyers that offer informa-

tion on similar properties that have gone smoke free;

- Letters aimed at specialty housing that discuss points that resonate with senior housing, student housing, transitional housing, etc.;
- Letters or flyers that promote upcoming events or thank attendees for coming to an event;
- Letters providing information on changes in applicable local laws or new national/local resources;
- Letters aimed at college housing offices, health clinics, or other community organizations encouraging them to promote your services;
- Letters sent after a building fire:
 - Explain that smoke-free policies may reduce future fire risk
 - Be careful to be sympathetic and helpful and avoid looking like you're taking advantage of a tragedy;
- ⊗ Postcards (see case study on page below)
- Letters or postcards that offer a prize or otherwise incentivize people to call your office, list their smoke-free building on your website, visit you at an event, or take action in another way.

OTHER FORMS OF OUTREACH

Sending information in the mail is only the first step to relaying your message. There are many other ways in which you can reach out to and build relationships with property managers. Be creative and figure out which strategies work for your community. Below are some sample activities to get you started.

Use visuals

When you meet with property managers one on one or at an event, bring materials or use pictures that will be attention grabbers and conversation starters. Managers know the amount of dam-

age that can be done to a unit due to secondhand smoke, but showing them samples of smoke-damaged items is an effective way to get them thinking about how much money they spend cleaning smoked-in units.

Offer appropriate materials

Keep in mind that property managers are businesspeople and your program materials should incorporate messages and images that resonate with the managers (to learn more about creating



Ask managers to give you smoke-damaged items that they replace while cleaning units.

Those items can be put in a portable display case and used to illustrate the costs of allowing smoking in units.

If you can't get the actual items, ask managers to take pictures and use those images during presentations and in your materials.

SAMPLE MATERIALS TO OFFER MANAGERS WHEN CONDUCTING OUTREACH

- Guidebook outlining the basic benefits and steps to adopting a policy;
- Packets with fact sheets and sample tools;
- DVDs or videos on your web site featuring managers, renters, and industry experts;
- Trinkets/giveaways to have at events; and
- Signs and banners to give to buildings that are smoke free.

i materials for managers, read Chapter 3, “Building a Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Program”). Create informational materials as well as trinkets/giveaways that can be given to attendees at every event. Bring a few samples of signs/banners to show what you offer to smoke-free buildings. Having all of those materials on hand reminds managers that your program can help them with many aspects of the policy adoption process.

Financial incentives

Most smoke-free multi-unit housing programs do not have the funds to offer financial incentives to encourage managers to adopt smoke-free policies, and ideally managers will adopt a policy because it's the right thing to do; however, a small amount of money might encourage a manager to adopt a policy quicker than he/she would on his/her own. If you have the capacity to offer some incentives and you want to try it as a strategy, do

so tactfully to avoid appearing as though you are bribing a manager or simply paying for a policy change. Managers will be less likely to enforce a policy later if they only adopted a policy in order to receive money from your program. Only a few smoke-free multi-unit housing programs in the United States have tried this strategy and most have found that financial incentives do not yield more policies than other strategies, but offering some money either directly to a manager or management company has gotten a few individual policies passed quickly.

Mini-grants can be offered to help support the manager's time that is put into implementing a policy. If a manager feels like adopting a policy would be too much extra work, a mini-grant can help to supplement the time he/she puts into conducting surveys, working with an owner or board, and writing and implementing lease changes. You can also offer gift cards to encourage managers. Something as simple as \$25 to conduct a renter survey and \$50 to adopt a policy is likely not enough to bribe someone who doesn't really want to adopt a policy, but a manager who is slowly moving toward policy adoption might find it to be a good reason to move the process along quicker.

Be aware that money doesn't always equal policy change. You may give someone a mini-grant or a gift card and he/she may never follow through with adopting a policy. Offering larger amounts of money are not a guarantee either. Assess the success of any financial incentive that you offer so that you can decide whether or not to continue the strategy.

Outreach to smoke-free buildings

Most of your outreach will focus on encouraging managers to contact and work with your program in order to adopt smoke-free policies. However, there will be many managers that adopt a smoke-free policy without your assistance. Perhaps they went smoke-free years ago, or maybe they saw you at a workshop or read your web site and found the information to be so helpful that they adopted a policy without needing to contact you. Don't be discouraged that you didn't assist in the policy adoption. Instead, work toward helping the manager promote their smoke-free policy. Once

you discover that a building is smoke free, be sure to report the promotional work that you do in your grant activities since you are still working to futher the trend in your area!

Since discovering existing smoke-free buildings is an important part of helping renters find a smoke-free place to live, you may want to devote a few hours a week to looking for smoke-free buildings. Enlist the help of a co-worker, intern, or office assistant and search Craigslist, apartment finder magazines, and newspapers for managers advertising a smoke-free building. You can also set up Google Alerts that will search the internet for similar ads. Take note of any smoke-free buildings that you hear about at conferences.

Once you find smoke-free buildings, send a letter or an email thanking the manager for having a smoke-free building. Offer something that will encourage the manager to contact you for promotional assistance such as free signs, a listing on your web site, or a press release announcing the policy.

UTILIZING THE MEDIA

The trend toward smoke-free housing has produced some very positive media pieces throughout the country. You can use existing articles as well as earned and paid media in your community to get your message to the public. If you are not familiar with creating media pieces, there are

CASE STUDY:

LIVE SMOKE FREE'S POSTCARD SERIES

Postcards can be an effective way to deliver your message because they are simple to create and mail. They're also cost effective, colorful, and a creative way to get the attention of the recipient. Live Smoke Free makes attempts to mail postcards twice a year so that our branding and message stay fresh in managers' minds (to learn more about branding and messaging, read Chapter 3, "Building Your Smoke-Free Housing Program").

Postcards Live Smoke Free Has Created (see the "Tools" chapter for examples):

- General information on the benefits of smoke-free housing;
- Promotion of our online directory of smoke-free buildings;
- Information on the cost savings possible with a smoke-free policy;
- Information on how smoke-free policies can reduce the risk of fire (Note: this postcard has been mailed a few times and is mailed in October since that is fire prevention month);
- Invitation to attend a Lunch & Learn workshop;
- Invitation to attend an educational webinar; and
- Results from a survey of area renters on their desires for smoke-free housing.



many great resources available for you to read; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Gateway to Health Communication and Social Marketing Practice is an excellent web site with more information. This section will focus on ways to incorporate smoke-free housing media into your work.

Paid vs. Earned media

⊗ Both paid media (such as advertisements) and earned media (such as a news story) can be beneficial to your program, but it's important to think carefully about which strategy will work best to achieve your goal. Your budget and your media market will play a large role in helping you decide if you can afford to buy ads and which news outlets might pick up your story.

Never underestimate the power of earned media. Whether it's a story published in your local newspaper or in your housing association's trade journal, earned media can pique the interest of your audience and encourage them to contact your program for more information. Plus, earned media is free! That means you have the potential to see a lot of reward without having to pay for it.

Paid media does have its place in a communications plan. If you're located in a large media market where it's more difficult to get an earned story, a well-placed and well-thought out ad can do just as much good. Be aware that some paid media can cost a lot of money for little return, so think carefully about the ad's purpose. Before purchasing media, develop a plan for evaluating the success of your media campaign. You may also find that an ad targeted at property managers and placed in a housing association trade journal is a better use of your funds than an ad targeted to the general public.

⊗ *Mainstream media vs. Housing industry media*

You can attempt to place an ad or get a story written in multiple kinds of media outlets. Large regional newspapers, small community newspapers, radio stations, television channels, housing trade magazines, and publications aimed at renters can all be effectively used to spread your

message. You will have to strategize which media outlets will be appropriate to target based on every story or ad you produce. A story about one apartment building going smoke free is probably of more relevance to (and thus, more likely to get printed in) a community newspaper rather than a regional newspaper. In contrast, the launch of your program's online directory of smoke-free housing is relevant to a larger audience and might be of interest for a primetime television news show.

It can be challenging to ensure that you are reaching your target audience by using mainstream media (media that is targeted at the general public). Housing managers and renters might be relatively small subsets of the population that may be viewing your ad or reading a story about your work through a particular newspaper, television channel, or other media outlet. You might spend a lot of energy and/or money trying to get a story or ad in a particular media outlet but not get any phone calls, emails, or smoke-free building policies in return.

If you want to ensure that you are reaching managers and renters, you will have to work with media outlets that cater especially to those populations. Your local housing trade association might produce a magazine or newsletter for its members. Contact the association to see if you can purchase ad space or write a guest column in the next issue. There might not be any particular educational or news-focused publications aimed at renters in your area, but the local rental search magazines might allow you to purchase ad space or write a short piece about smoke-free multi-unit housing in one of their issues. When working with industry media, it is often more likely that your story will get published if you have an existing relationship with the organization that is producing the magazine or newsletter. You can use many of the tips in this chapter to help you build those relationships!

If you cannot get your own story published in your local housing industry media, there are existing media pieces that you can use. The national multi-unit housing industry is already talking about smoke-free housing in their trade publica-



tions. Share these articles with managers since they are published by sources that managers find credible. In February 2008, the National Multi-Housing Council included an article in their publication *Property Management Update* titled “No-Smoking Policies in Apartments.”² The National Apartment Association has published two lengthy articles in their publication, *UNITS Magazine*. In December 2007, *UNITS* published a 10-page compilation of smoke-free articles that was featured on the magazine’s cover under the title “Clearing the Air: Industry Discusses Trend Toward Smoke-Free Housing.”³ Then, in April 2011, *UNITS* published “A Breath of Fresh Air.” All of these pieces feature information from housing industry professionals as well as smoke-free housing advocates. The National Multi-Housing Council and the National Apartment Association generally allow for these articles to be reprinted if you contact them for permission.

PARTNERING WITH NONTRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES

Working one-on-one with managers is the quickest and most effective way to see policy success. However, there are other relationships that you can build in the housing industry that will show smoke-free policies as a social norm, build demand for smoke-free housing among renters, and help encourage more managers to contemplate policy adoption. Housing association conferences are a great place to meet and build relationships with people in these nontraditional industries!

Rental search services



There are numerous magazines, newspapers, and web sites that help renters find apartments. Many of these services have icons or quick ways to find buildings that are pet-friendly, green, close to mass transit, etc. Make a connection with

CASE STUDY:

ONLINE ADVERTISING WITH THE MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

In 2010, Live Smoke Free decided to run ads with a large metropolitan newspaper. The online ads were featured on the “Rentals” web page where potential renters could see the ad as they searched for apartments to rent. The ad cost \$12,000, ran for five months, and was seen approximately 441,688 times. When a viewer clicked on the ad, they were taken to Live Smoke Free’s web site. We tracked the number of visitors to our web site from the Star Tribune and tracked the number of people who contacted our office after seeing the ad. Unfortunately, only 0.22% of people who saw the ad clicked through to our web site and no one contacted our office because of the ad, which was one of our major goals for the campaign.

Even through a click-through rate of 0.22% matches the average rate for online ads, we decided that was too much money to spend if people were only going to visit our web site and not contact our office. Live Smoke Free had never done a major ad campaign before, so we believed it was worth trying. We now know that we can have better success with ads targeted in housing trade journals and earned media than with paid ads aimed at the general public.

CASE STUDY: Rental Search Services in Minnesota

RENT411 (WWW.RENT411.COM)



The first rental search service to promote smoke-free policies; they consider themselves a socially-conscious company and believed promoting smoke-free housing was the right thing to do.

- The company was preparing for a revamp of their magazine and web site so it took several years for the smoke-free housing promotion to be rolled out with the new system. In order to incentivize RENT411 to include smoke-free policies in their new system, Live Smoke Free financially sponsored part of the system change.
- The company's graphic design team worked with Live Smoke Free to develop a simple cloud icon that is shown on ads of smoke-free buildings.
- The web site has a search feature that allows users to see only smoke-free buildings; the magazine has a "smoke-free building table of contents" that lists all of the buildings using the cloud icon in that month's issue.
- Managers pay \$25 to use the cloud icon (similar icons cost \$100, but RENT411 thought it was important that the icon not be cost prohibitive); RENT411 uses the revenue from the cloud icon to pay for the "smoke-free building table of contents," since that page could be seen as lost advertising space.
- Live Smoke Free has worked with RENT411 to distribute a press release

and mail information to managers about the cloud icon's availability; Live Smoke Free has also agreed to allow RENT411 to use our program's name during months when smoke-free housing is a cover story.

- RENT411 works closely with the managers who advertise in their magazine to track and measure how renters found a particular building and whether or not the renter decided to rent a unit. The April/May 2011 "Smoke Free RENT411" cover, table of contents, and cloud icons generated the following results for the buildings that participated in the campaign that month: 32 potential renters inquired about renting in buildings that advertised their smoke-free policies. Those renters were nearly 20% of the inquiries in April. Out of those 32 potential renters, 21 decided to live in the building they inquired about and signed leases to live in the building. Those 21 renters who signed leases made up over 20% of the leases signed by RENT411 customers in April. The potential renters and the renters who eventually signed leases all cited seeing the smoke-free policy information in RENT411 as a part of what attracted them to a particular building.

THE APARTMENT LIVING GUIDE (HTTP://APTLIVINGGUIDE.COM):



A new company that asked Live Smoke Free to advertise on their web site and in their magazine; Live Smoke Free agreed to advertise for a few months if the company would create a way to promote smoke-free housing.

- Live Smoke Free created the “smoke-free building” icon, and the Apartment Living Guide’s graphics department created ads featuring Live Smoke Free’s services.
- The web site has a search feature that allows users to see only smoke-free buildings.

The Apartment Living Guide uses Live Smoke Free’s ad to fill unsold ad space each month at no cost to our program. That means our ad might be in a magazine several times each month for no additional charge. They run our ad rather than other ads because they like providing renters with information about a nonprofit service that is focused on helping renters find healthy places to live.

HOUSINGLINK (WWW.HOUSINGLINK.ORG):

A nonprofit dedicated to connecting renters with affordable housing; Live Smoke Free partnered with HousingLink for a few years by educating HousingLink’s staff on smoke-free housing and exhibiting at HousingLink’s events.

- HousingLink approached Live Smoke Free for some fundraising opportunities; Live Smoke Free agreed to sponsor part of HousingLink’s web site if they created a way for renters to find smoke-free housing.
- HousingLink now has a search feature for smoke-free housing and put information about Live Smoke Free on their “Resources” web page.

rental search companies in your area and explain that renters want smoke-free housing but often struggle to find buildings that are smoke free. Many rental search services do not currently have a way for renters to find smoke-free housing, so companies that create a way to search for smoke-free buildings will be offering something unique that their competitors likely do not have.

Encouraging rental search services to promote smoke-free housing not only gives renters more options to find smoke-free housing; it also serves as a way for managers to see that more and more buildings are becoming smoke free. Managers often look at other ads in apartment search services in order to see what’s trending for rent pricing and amenities.

Unfortunately, rental search services won’t necessarily understand why it is important for them to promote smoke-free buildings. You will have to show them that there is a demand among renters for smoke-free housing. You can also appeal to the company’s charitable nature and explain how smoke-free housing is a social justice issue that they can have an opportunity to influence.

If a company is interested in promoting smoke-free housing, you may have to work with their graphic design department to create a “smoke-free housing” icon. Companies may not want to use the same icon that their competitors are using, so you may have to design new icons for each rental search service.

The green building industry

Eco-friendly buildings provide healthy places for renters to live, which makes them a natural partner with a smoke-free housing program. Unfortunately, many managers don’t realize that a building can’t truly be green unless it’s smoke free. Even green certification programs such as LEED do not require apartment buildings to be smoke free in order to obtain certification. You can partner with organizations that promote green buildings and encourage them to include smoke-free policies as a part of their work.

*CASE STUDY:***PARTNERSHIP WITH MINNESOTA GREEN COMMUNITIES**

www.mngreencommunities.org

Minnesota Green Communities is a nonprofit that works to create affordable green housing. The organization's program coordinator worked with Live Smoke Free for a few years because the rental property that she personally owns is smoke free. As the organization was reevaluating their certification program and looking to improve their materials, they decided to incorporate ways to encourage buildings to go smoke free.

The certification program offered by Minnesota Green Communities allows buildings to earn certification by applying through a point-based system. Buildings must have 30-35 points in order to earn certification. A smoke-free policy is not a requirement of certification, but it does earn a building 9 points—that's 25-30% of the building's application and can be a good incentive to adopt a smoke-free policy.

Minnesota Green Communities also offers a Healthy Home Checklist that allows renters to compare healthy features of buildings as they look for a place to live. It also allows managers to showcase the healthy features that their building offers. The checklist asks "Is there a smoke-free policy?" and denotes the policy's importance with two out of three available stars. You can see the checklist by visiting http://mngreencommunities.org/publications/download/Healthy-Home_checklist.pdf.

If the organization offers a green certification, ask that they either require that buildings be smoke free or that they offer points in a certification application if a building is smoke free. Green organizations may also work with buildings that want to implement some green initiatives without seeking official certification. Partner with green organizations to reach out to all buildings interested in becoming green, whether or not they are seeking certification. Work with the green organizations to give presentations and materials to interested managers.

The insurance industry

Many managers ask if they will receive any insurance discounts by going smoke free—which is understandable since smoke-free policies reduce property damage and the risk of fire. Managers and renters may be able to negotiate lower premiums with their insurance companies, but most insurance companies do not offer automatic discounts for smoke-free buildings.

Many insurance companies are national and may be outside of your program's scope, but look for local or regional companies that you can work with. Encourage these companies to implement a discount for smoke-free buildings (the insurance companies can collect smoke-free lease addenda to confirm the smoke-free policies). You can also talk with your state's department of insurance or department of commerce to investigate if anything can be done on the state level.

Chapter References

- 1 Boston, L. "A Breath of Fresh Air: 5 Reasons to Consider Implementing a Smoke-free Housing Policy." *Units*. National Apartment Association, Apr. 2011. Web. Jan. 2013. <http://www.naahq.org/publications/units/2011/04_11/Pages/ABreathofFreshAir.aspx>.
- 2 National Multi Housing Council. *No-Smoking Policies In Apartments*. Washington: National Multi Housing Council, 2008. PDF.
- 3 Schoenmarklin, S., K. Meiner, and J. Petterson. "Clearing the Air: Industry Discusses Trend Toward Smoke-Free Housing." *Units*. National Apartment Association, Dec. 2007. Web. Jan. 2013.

A CLOSER LOOK: Navigating the Insurance Industry

In most states, insurance companies that want to offer discounts have to get those discounts approved by the state's department of insurance.

Many insurance companies are members of the Insurance Services Office (ISO). ISO is a provider of data, underwriting, risk management and legal/regulatory services and monitors regulatory standards and insurance laws. ISO publishes rating manuals outlining property insurance risks. The rating manuals analyze variables such as the age of a building, the type of construction, the presence of a sprinkler system, etc. and calculate the chance per square foot of having a property loss due to fire or other covered peril.

Competing insurance companies will get the same premium from customers if they charge strictly on the ISO calculations. Since insurance companies want to entice customers to insure with their company, they attempt to modify the amount they charge based on factors they find during an inspection and give discounts and credits accordingly. However, to give any credits, an insurance company must file with the department of insurance in each state where they operate and plan to offer a credit. They must explain the types of credits they plan to offer and the rationale for doing so.

Insurance companies are beginning to learn about the benefits of smoke-free policies not only to apartment owners, but also for the insurance company because the risk of property loss caused by fire is lower. Insurance companies might want to compete for more apartment building business and think good clients with a lower fire risk might be encouraged to insure with them if they offer a discount for being a smoke-free building or property. To offer those discounts, insurance companies must first tell the department of insurance in each state in which they want to offer a discount with appropriate paperwork and justification, and get the states' permission, before the companies can give a formal underwriting discount for



a smoke-free policy. This would allow insurance companies to give a discount to any smoke-free building they insure.

Insurance companies also usually have some discretionary credits (that are already approved by the department of insurance) that they can use for specific buildings because they believe the building has a lower risk for damage or loss. For instance, if a building is well-constructed, has the latest fire protection and security systems, is well-maintained, and has never had a claim it might qualify for discretionary credits. An insurance broker/agent can try to convince an underwriter into applying those discretionary credits toward a smoke-free property because of the lower risk of property damage that a smoke-free policy provides.

Some insurance companies have a limited amount of discretionary credits that they can offer. Therefore, it might make sense for an insurance company to file with the department of insurance in order to be able to offer specific discounts for smoke-free policies rather than relying on discretionary credits. Insurance companies might be interested in learning more about the benefits of smoke-free multi-unit housing policies because it might make them more competitive in the multi-unit housing market if they have a “smoke-free policy” credit to offer.

Source: Andrea Portenier, Tobacco Use Prevention Program, County of Orange Health Care Agency, California

CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS:

Why is it important to build partnerships with local housing organizations?

- Partnerships will yield information about the scope of multi-unit housing in your community.
- Partnerships will provide connections to multi-unit housing owners and managers.
- Partnerships will provide opportunities to educate the local housing industry about the benefits of smoke-free policies.

Why is it important to attend housing conferences?

- Housing conferences provide insight into the housing industry and associated organizations.
- Housing conferences provide opportunities to reach and build relationships with multiple housing managers at once.

Why is it important to continually reach out to the housing industry?

- Most property managers need to hear about smoke-free policies several times before deciding to act.
- Even if property managers do not adopt a policy immediately after you reach out to them, the information you share will encourage them to begin contemplating the benefits of smoke-free policies.
- Utilize several forms of outreach to most effectively reach all sorts of property managers.

Why is media important?

- Earned media can raise awareness about secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing and the benefits of smoke-free policies.
- Strategically-placed paid media in publications that target the multi-unit housing industry can be an effective form of outreach to property managers.
- While paid media can help your cause, it may not always be the most effective form of outreach because you are trying to reach a small group (renters and/or managers) rather than the general population.

SAMPLE TOOLS

- *Program websites*
- *Educational booklets for managers*
- *Educational postcards for managers*
- *Educational ads for managers*
- *Trinkets for managers*

PRACTITIONER'S CHECKLIST:

ARE YOU READY TO REACH OUT TO THE HOUSING INDUSTRY?

- Have you contacted local housing organizations to determine how they can help you reach managers?
- Have you joined your local housing trade associations?
- Have you identified opportunities to present information at housing conferences?
- Do you have an outreach plan that includes multiple strategies?
- Have you developed materials to give to managers educating them about your program and smoke-free policies?
- Do you have a systematic plan to discover and reach out to existing smoke-free buildings?
- Do you have a communications plan that includes earned and paid media?
- Have you investigated potential nontraditional partners that might help further your program's goals?

RESOURCES

- *Apartment Living Guide:* www.aptlivingguide.com
- *Community Associations Institute (CAI):* www.caionline.org
- *HousingLink:* www.housinglink.org
- *Insurance Services Office (ISO):* www.iso.com
- *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED):* www.usgbc.org/leed
- *Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Allocation Plan (LIHTC QAP):* http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/training/web/lihtc
- *Minnesota Green Communities:* www.mngreencommunities.org
- *Minnesota Multi-Housing Association (MHA):* www.mmha.com
- *National Apartment Association (NAA):* www.naahq.org
- *National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO):* www.nahro.org
- *National Multi-Housing Council (NMHC):* www.nmhc.org
- *Public Health Law Center (PHLC):* www.publichealthlawcenter.org
- *RENT411:* www.rent411.com