

Smoke Free Parks and Playgrounds

A Proposal by the Erie Niagara Tobacco Free Coalition
And the American Cancer Society



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Designation of tobacco-free outdoor recreation areas is a growing national trend. Thousands of communities including many in New York State have established tobacco-free parks and recreation areas. Tobacco use can be offensive and detrimental to the health of children and adults who are engaging in or watching outdoor recreational activities at municipally owned or operated facilities.

Your community has a unique opportunity to create and sustain an environment that supports a non-tobacco norm through a tobacco-free policy for outdoor recreational areas. The Erie-Niagara Tobacco-Free Coalition, located at Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and the American Cancer Society will work with you and other community leaders, park supervisors and government representatives to preserve the environment and protect the health of residents to create a smoke free policy for recreational areas.

There is No Law that Guarantees a Person's "Right" to Smoke in Parks and Playgrounds.

All types of governments whether they represent the smallest village or largest urban city are legally entitled to create policies which restrict outdoor smoking on their outside premises.

You have the right to protect your community, its environment and the health of your residents with the adoption of tobacco-free policies in parks and recreational areas.

Tobacco-free outdoor spaces already exist in Erie and Niagara Counties. 14 hospitals along with the State University at Buffalo have 100% smoke-free campuses.

Are Tobacco-Free Parks and Playgrounds Important? Yes, and Here Is Why.

Create a Healthier Community

Secondhand smoke, even in open areas, can be damaging to the health of children and adults. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Make a Cleaner Environment

The remains of cigarette use – cigarette butts – make parks and playgrounds dirty and uninviting. Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world. They are highly toxic and dangerous to children and animals when ingested. Cigarette filters DO NOT decompose for years afterward.

Offer a Role Model for Children

When children see adults smoking in family-friendly places such as parks and playgrounds, they see the behavior as acceptable.

Parks are about clean air, natural beauty and engaging in healthy activities. Smoking just doesn't fit in. We need to send better messages to our children.

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Save Taxpayer Dollars

Litter isn't cheap. Cigarettes, once consumed in public spaces, are often discarded on the ground, requiring additional maintenance expenses. Millions of taxpayer dollars are spent annually picking up litter. Think of how much money could be saved if the most littered item – tobacco material – were reduced.

Four Easy Steps to Create Tobacco-Free Parks and Playgrounds in Your Community:

1. Develop a policy, resolution, local law or ordinance that includes the list of parks and playgrounds or specific areas within the park or playground to be covered by the smoke-free policy.
2. Include a statement that all forms of tobacco use are prohibited.
3. Develop an enforcement plan that includes signage.
4. Develop a plan to notify and educate park and playground staff and the public.



**Erie-Niagara
Tobacco-Free
Coalition**

To support the creation of Smoke free Parks, the Erie-Niagara Tobacco-Free Coalition will provide:

➤ **FREE Signage:**

Parks and playgrounds will be provided with standard pre-imprinted outdoor signage approved by department officials to place along the border of the designated tobacco-free area. There is a place on each sign to add additional logos or text.

➤ **Printed educational material:**

Copies of educational materials to be made available include a community education flyer, an educational brochure about tobacco-free parks and playgrounds, a draft press release, and brochures about smoking cessation from the NYS Smokers' Quitline.

➤ **FREE press and advertisement:**

The Erie-Niagara Tobacco-Free Coalition located at Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society will feature in advertisements, website, press materials, and educational brochures all communities who adopt smoke-free parks and recreational areas.

➤ **FREE community education event:**

The Tobacco Control Programs of Erie County, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society will organize a community awareness event. This event would be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time/date and held at the site of a tobacco-free park or playground tobacco-free zone to provide information about the tobacco-free initiative and support a tobacco-free lifestyle.

➤ **Resources and Technical Assistance:**

The Erie-Niagara Tobacco-Free Coalition will provide materials such as sample laws, ordinances, policies or resolutions. The Coalition also will offer assistance in the development of a communications plan which will notify the community and municipal employees of the details of the smoke-free policy.

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Draft Smoke-Free Park and Playground Resolution:

The (Name of Municipality) agrees to the adoption of the following policy designating all parks, beaches and recreation spaces under its jurisdiction to be 100% smoke-free.

WHEREAS, smoking is responsible for the premature deaths of over 430,000 Americans each year from lung cancer, heart disease, respiratory illness and other diseases; and

WHEREAS, secondhand smoke is responsible for over 50,000 deaths among nonsmokers each year; and

WHEREAS, tobacco kills more Americans each year than alcohol, cocaine, crack, heroin, homicide, suicide, accidents, fires, and AIDS combined; and

WHEREAS, 80% of smokers started smoking before the age of 18, and the average initiation age is 12 years old; and

WHEREAS, everyday an estimated 3,900 young people under the age of 18 try their first cigarette and one-third of these children will die prematurely from tobacco-related illnesses; and

WHEREAS, to help role model non-smoking behavior to children and youth; to provide children, youth and their families with a safe, smoke-free environment; therefore be it

Resolved that (Name of Municipality), State of New York, is committed to providing a high quality of living to all residents. And be it further resolved that the (Name of Municipality) believes:

1. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. It can cause asthma, respiratory infections, cancer and cardiovascular disease. Children should be able to play and exercise in (Name of Municipality) Parks without being exposed to harmful effects of secondhand smoke.
2. Tobacco product use in the proximity of children, youth and adults engaging in or watching recreational activities is unhealthy and detrimental to the health of both the participants and observers.
3. Tobacco products, once consumed in public spaces, are often discarded on the ground, thus posing a risk of ingestion to children and causing a litter problem. And be it further

Resolved that all of (Name of Municipality) parks, beaches and recreation areas will adopt a 100% smoke free policy.

Compliance

The enforcement of this policy is through **voluntary compliance**. Appropriate (Name of Municipality) park land, park facilities and open space will be signed indicating that the designated areas are smoke-free.

The Commissioner of Parks and Recreation will communicate with parks employees and officials, community organizers, leaders and coaches to discuss the policy and to distribute information.

(Name of Municipality) parks staff will be responsible for promoting awareness of this policy.

(Name of Elected Official) shall certify to the adoption of this policy.

This policy will become effective on (Month, Day, and Year).