

# BENEFITS OF A SMOKEFREE WORKPLACE

From “Making Your Workplace Smokefree: A Decision Maker’s Guide

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Office on Smoking and Health

Wellness Councils of America  
American Cancer Society

*The primary benefit of a smokefree environment is the protection of all employees from the health risks of ETS.*

## **BENEFITS OF A SMOKEFREE WORKPLACE**

### **For the employees**

- ◆ A smokefree environment helps create a safe, healthful workplace.
- ◆ A well planned and carefully implemented effort by the employer to address the effects of smoking on employees' health and the health of their families shows the company cares.
- ◆ Workers who are bothered by smoke will not be exposed to it at the worksite.
- ◆ Smokers appreciate a clear company policy about smoking at work.
- ◆ Managers are relieved when a process for dealing with smoking in the workplace is clearly defined.



### **For the employer**

- ◆ A smokefree environment helps create a safe, healthful workplace.
- ◆ Direct health care costs to the company may be reduced.
- ◆ Maintenance costs go down when smoke, matches, and cigarette butts are eliminated in facilities.
- ◆ Office equipment, carpets, and furniture last longer.
- ◆ It may be possible to negotiate lower health, life, and disability coverage as employee smoking is reduced.

### **Support for Workplace Policies**

Comprehensive smoking policies, including facility-wide smokefree policies, are not new. However, smokefree policies have received a significant boost over the past 10 years as evidence of the risks associated with exposure to ETS (environmental tobacco smoke) has mounted and the public has become more aware of these risks.

Employers have responded by implementing smokefree policies and as of 2007, 15 states have enacted smokefree workplace legislation that covers offices, restaurants, and bars. Many other states have laws that protect workers in offices and restaurants, but not bars.

### **Productivity and Medical Costs**

A smokefree workplace can enhance productivity in two ways: by reducing the effects of ETS on nonsmokers and by reducing excess smoking-related absenteeism among smokers who are motivated to quit as a result of the smokefree policy. For small businesses especially, which have employees who handle a variety of tasks, productivity can be greatly increased by reduced absenteeism.

A smoker who quits smoking could save employers an estimated \$3,400 per year. This includes savings from healthcare costs, absenteeism, work time spent on smoking rituals, higher life insurance premiums costs, higher risk of occupational injuries, costlier disability and more disciplinary actions.

Employers have an important role in helping smokers quit. For most employers, this means adding coverage for cessation services to their health insurance benefits because 64 percent of Americans receive their health coverage through their employer.

Ohio is fortunate to have a free tobacco cessation quitline provided by the Ohio Tobacco Prevention Foundation. That toll-free number is 1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).

Employers have seen a return on investment in three years with benefits sooner, especially increases in productivity and reductions in health care costs for pregnant smokers.

An effective benefit combines several proactive quitline sessions with medications, including nicotine patches, gum and/or Zyban or Chantix for a cost of about 38 cents per member per month.

### **This year alone, nearly 19,000 Ohioans will die prematurely.**

Thousands more will become terribly ill with tobacco-related cancer, heart or respiratory disease. Some of these people work for you. Others are the spouse, child, parent or friend of someone who works for you.

Tobacco costs – physically, emotionally and economically. You can cut those costs and improve your employees' health and productivity by helping them quit tobacco.