

Evaluation of Guardian Management's No-Smoking Policy

Barbara Pizacani, PhD, MPH
Program Design and Evaluation Services
Multnomah County Health Dept. and Oregon Public Health Division

Background

- On 1/1/08, Guardian Management LLC implemented a no-smoking policy for ALL its properties.
- The policy prohibits tenants, staff and visitors from smoking inside and outside within 25' of buildings
- This applied to 130 properties (12,000 units private & public) in 7 states

Background, continued

- This evaluation focused on the low-income units managed by Guardian designated for govt.- sponsored housing subsidies (Sections 8 & 42)
 - 17 buildings in tri-county area
 - Urban and rural
 - Over 800 tenants, many elderly and/or disabled

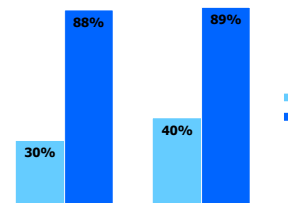
Study questions

- How did nonsmoking tenants feel about the policy?
- Were there changes in SHS exposure?
- How do tenants who smoke feel about the policy and are they compliant?
- Did the policy help smokers quit or smoke less?

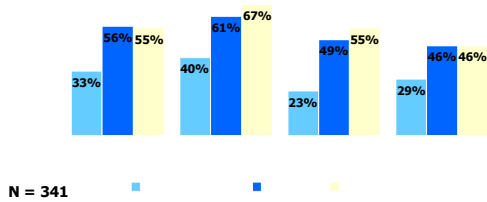
Methods: Overview

- Mailed questionnaires to a tenant from each household, at two time points
- Conducted telephone interviews with tenants selected by smoking status

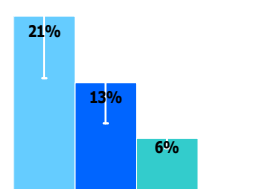
Tenants happy with policy



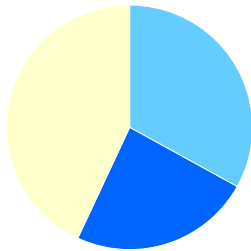
Nonsmokers reporting no exposure to SHS



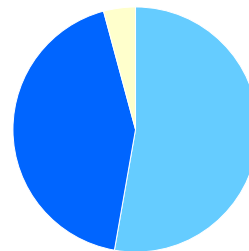
Quits since policy began (Jan 2008 – May 2009)



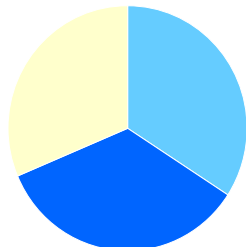
Quits: Did policy contribute?



Changes in amount smoked in past year (among continuing smokers)



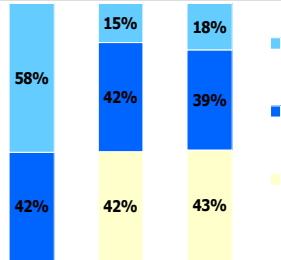
Smoking less: Did policy contribute?



Noncompliance with policy

- Almost 60% of smokers reported some noncompliance
- Noncompliance defined as smoking in one or more of the following places:
 - in apartment
 - on porch/balcony
 - in indoor or outdoor common spaces
 - in car on property

Noncompliance by smokers by location



Preliminary Data
N = 94

Methods: Tenant interviews

- n=29 tenants: 5 current, 10 former, 8 never smokers, 6 who quit post-policy
- Phone interviews w/ semi-structured guide:
 - Opinions about the policy
 - Exposure to SHS before and after the policy
 - Home smoking rules and practice before and after the policy
 - Among smokers, changes in smoking-related behavior since policy implementation

What did nonsmokers say?

- Nonsmokers praised the policy for promoting health, fire safety, and building cleanliness:
 - *"People can get really sick from being in rooms with secondhand smoke...I think it's a much more healthy way to live with the No Smoking policy."*
 - *"Someone could fall asleep with a lit cigarette and start a fire, so I like that that can't happen now."*

What did quitters say?

- The policy provided the extra motivation they needed to quit now:

"I was trying to get myself weaned off of cigarettes already, but then when they put the policy in place, then, you know, it's time. Especially at my age, you decide 'OK. OK. I can't move. I don't want to move, so it's better to be healthy.'"

What did smokers say about the policy?

- Smokers felt the policy was unfair, particularly because adopted after tenancy established:
 - *"This is my home. You can't tell me what to do in my home!"*
 - *"I signed that contract knowing I could smoke in my apartment. Otherwise, I doubt that I would have moved in here. I would have found a different place."*

Conclusions: Acceptability

- The no-smoking policy was well-accepted among most tenants:
 - Most nonsmokers strongly in favor
 - Only 1 in 3 smokers accepted the policy
 - Attitudes did not change over time

Conclusions: Compliance

- About 60% of smokers reported some level of noncompliance with the policy
- However, prevalence of indoor smoking decreased dramatically from 58% to 18%
- Difficult to enforce indoor smoking ban on the recalcitrant few (1 in 6)

Conclusions: It Works

- SHS exposure decreased significantly soon after the policy and stayed that way.
- Among smokers, the policy was associated with reductions in cigarette consumption and successful quits.

Recommendations & Challenges

- Education about the no-smoking policy is important.
- Linkage to smoking cessation services is crucial, especially in a low-income, high prevalence population.
- Indoor smoking and concerns about tenant isolation/marginalization were enforcement challenges in this population.
 - Elderly & disabled can't simply "walk down the block" or move
 - They have 2 choices: quit or break the rules

Acknowledgements

- This evaluation was supported by:
 - The Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program
 - The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (SAPRP grant # 65079)

Further Information

- Barbara Pizacani, Ph.D.
 - Barbara.a.pizacani@state.or.us