

# Researchers study impact of smoking ban in homeless shelter

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Instituting a partial smoking ban at a homeless shelter can lead to a reduction in expired carbon monoxide levels, an indicator of exposure to cigarette smoke, and may have positive effects on shelter residents' health, according to new research. The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) released the study results last week in the journal *Addictive Behaviors*.

The rate of smoking in the United States has fallen to 18 percent among adults, but among [homeless](#) adults, the rate is a staggering 70 percent. According to previous UTHealth research, this may be because homeless smokers who are trying to quit smoking typically encounter an average of 40 smokers per day, more than in other populations.

"Addressing the culture of smoking in [homeless shelters](#) through policy changes may improve health and support cessation in this population," said Michael Businelle, Ph.D., principal investigator and assistant professor of health promotion and behavioral sciences at the UTHealth School of Public Health Dallas Regional Campus.

The study recruited 394 participants at a Dallas homeless shelter. Researchers surveyed shelter residents to see how they would feel about a partial or shelter-wide [smoking ban](#). Sixty percent of residents supported a large smoke-free zone on the shelter campus, but only 30 percent of residents supported a shelter-wide smoking ban.

After a partial outdoor smoking ban was enacted, researchers measured

changes in attitudes and resident health. Participants in the study experienced a significant reduction in expired carbon monoxide levels, around 15 percent, indicating less smoking and/or less exposure to secondhand smoke. The outdoor smoke-free courtyard was used more frequently following the implementation of the partial ban.

Only 14 percent of smokers reported that they would try to move to another shelter, while 35 percent reported that they would try to quit [smoking](#) if a shelter-wide ban was implemented. While most residents still did not support a shelter-wide ban, most smokers believed this policy would improve resident [health](#).

"This type of [shelter](#) policy change may be well tolerated with few negative consequences," said Businelle.

**More information:** "Smoking policy change at a homeless shelter: Attitudes and effects", *Addictive Behaviors*, 2014.

Provided by University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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