

Smoke-free policies benefit apartment dwellers, owners

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Adopting a smoke-free policy can improve the living environment for apartment dwellers while reducing maintenance costs, according to a survey of multiunit housing owners and operators.

Assistant professor Linda Burdette of the Aberdeen Accelerated Nursing Program and research associate Jennifer Kerkvliet at the Brookings campus surveyed South Dakota multiunit housing owners/operators about the use of smoke-free policies.

They collaborated with Dee Dee Dugstad, tobacco program coordinator for the South Dakota Department of Health. The South Dakota Tobacco Control State Plan seeks to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke.

Each year 3,000 adult nonsmokers die of lung cancer due to exposure to [secondhand smoke](#), according to the National Cancer Institute.

Though restaurants and bars are smoke free, there are no such regulations to protect apartment dwellers, explained Burdette. Dugstad and her colleagues at the South Dakota Department of Health began exploring smoke-free policies in apartment buildings in 2011.

"We hadn't worked on multiunit housing, so we didn't have a baseline," Dugstad explained. The 2013 survey gives them the data they need to encourage apartment owners to implement voluntary smoke-free policies. Since then, they have developed an [apartment](#) manager's guide

and no-smoking signage that owners can access here.

In assessing smoke-free policies in multiunit housing facilities, Burdette and her colleagues found that nearly 55 percent of the 324 housing owners/operators surveyed had written policies in their lease agreements. An additional 10 percent informed tenants verbally that smoking was not allowed.

Though 38 percent of the survey respondents without a smoke-free [policy](#) thought they would lose tenants when they adopted the policy, Burdette said, "that was not the case." Only 1 percent of property owners who implemented a smoke-free policy noted an increase in turnover rates and 3 percent felt vacancy rates had increased.

Burdette also pointed out [owners](#) experienced little difficulty enforcing the no-smoking policy; however, the majority did permit smoking outside the buildings. In addition, the respondents whose [housing](#) units had smoke-free policies reported a decrease in maintenance costs along with improved safety and tenant health.

Provided by South Dakota State University

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