



Tobacco-Free Initiative

Frequently Asked Employee Questions

Why are Kansas hospitals undertaking this initiative?

Our goal is to create a healthy environment for employees, patients and visitors.

How dangerous is tobacco use?

Tobacco is the cause of death for 4,400 Kansans every year and is the root cause of many illnesses and lost productivity. Tobacco use in and around hospitals poses health and safety risks for patients, employees and visitors.

Why can't individuals use tobacco products outside of hospitals?

Second-hand smoke has been proven hazardous to people's health. An international panel of experts brought together by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an agency of the World Health Organization, determined that second-hand smoke causes cancer. As a health care provider, hospitals must provide an overall healthy environment to patients, employees and visitors – inside and out.

How many hospitals are going tobacco-free?

Hospitals across Kansas have joined together with a goal of being tobacco-free. As health care organizations, we are committed to the health and safety of our employees and patients. We believe that we have a responsibility to take a leadership role on this major health issue, and allowing people to use tobacco products defeats this purpose.

Do employees, patients and visitors have to quit using tobacco?

No. Hospitals are not forcing anyone to quit. This policy means individuals can't use tobacco products on hospital property.

What about individual rights?

Hospitals want to maintain a healthy environment for patients and visitors, as well as for employees. For this reason, we ask that individuals refrain from using tobacco products on this campus.

What are hospitals doing to help employees who use tobacco products?

Many hospitals are offering smoking cessation classes and/or tobacco-abatement products. In addition, individuals who use tobacco are encouraged to talk to their physician about other options and alternative resources.

How do patients who use tobacco products seek help?

Upon admission to any Kansas hospital, patients are encouraged to notify the admissions staff if they use tobacco products. This information will be forwarded to their physician who can make arrangements to provide them with tobacco-abatement products or discuss alternative resources.



Tobacco-Free Initiative Employee Questions Continued

What about our patients who are having a difficult time without the use tobacco products?

This situation may be challenging. Our physicians have developed standing orders, which make available nicotine replacement options and therapies to help our patients. Try using the same distraction techniques you might use if a patient wants alcohol; a squeeze ball, gum, mints, etc. A chaplain is another resource.

How does tobacco use decrease or hinder our ability to carry out our daily job functions?

We are so proud of our exceptional staff. This initiative is not about job performance. It is about creating a healthy environment.

What rights/privileges are going to be taken away from individuals who do not use tobacco products?

We are going tobacco-free to create a healthy environment for everyone. It is not meant to take away anything from anyone.

Will employees be expected to ask people to stop using tobacco products?

Yes. It's all our responsibility to ensure that we maintain a tobacco-free environment. Once our initiative begins, cards will be available for employees to hand to someone who is using tobacco products. The cards will politely remind individuals about our policy.

What if someone is in great stress and really needs to use a tobacco product?

We know that a cultural change of this magnitude can take time. We are asking employees to do the best they can. Another option might be to ask the individual, "How can I help you get through this difficult time?"

If a visitor or patient refuses to stop using a tobacco product, will we call the police?

No. We will not call the police. If employees have given the visitor or patient a reminder card and asked politely that they stop using tobacco products, we've done our best. Cultural changes like this can take time, and we can't expect everyone to be compliant right away.

Can I be fired for tobacco use?

After repeated violations, warnings and counseling sessions, tobacco use violations will be treated like other infractions currently listed in the employee handbook or the HR policy manual. See Human Resources if you have questions about how violations are handled.