



July 26, 2010

Denver Public Health

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Carol Boigon
Denver City Council Member At-large

Dear Councilwoman Boigon:

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As requested, here are the responses to your questions. We appreciate the efforts on behalf of Denver Health and the Denver hospital community. To collect this information, we enlisted the help of a MD/MPH student at the Colorado School of Public Health. In early May, he conducted a survey with Denver Health employees from various departments: Nursing, Pharmacy, Dental, Public Health, Public Relations, Human Resources, Security, Operations and Legal. Their responses to the survey helped form the answers to many of your questions. Our Denver Public Health responses are also included the following answers.

1. Was the ban effective in eliminating smoking on the public right-of way adjoining your hospital and all its relevant building, especially near patient entrances and exists?

Yes, we have seen a decrease in the number of people smoking on our campus. According to one survey respondent, "there are fewer people smoking. The policy has helped but it's a work in progress. It takes constant education." The perception of the number of smokers and the amount of cigarette litter has also decreased.

2. Have you had any concerns – negative or positive – about the impacts of the ban? Please explain.

The sidewalk ordinance has been essential to help us enforce our campus wide tobacco-free policy. According to one survey respondent, "If this campus were smoke-free without the ordinance it would be a useless policy." Another respondent commented: "It gives us legal backing for our policy. It's a huge help. It gives us backing with the public and gives the right message that the city is behind us-very important to our effort."

One concern that was noted by a survey respondent was that it moved smoking to the perimeters and out into the neighborhoods (this will be addressed more in questions 4 and 5). "You don't stop it, you move it. We've moved it from the main campus to the perimeter, which is not a good image."

3. Has your facility received any comments from patients and/or visitors on the smoking ban? Please be specific. How have you responded?

The comment we receive most often when we inform patients and visitors of our tobacco free policy and the sidewalk ordinance is "where can I go to smoke." We just inform them about the policy and let them know there are resources to quit smoking including nicotine gum,

lozenges and the patch available in the gift shop. We do not direct them to a specific location. We inform them that they cannot smoke on campus and thank them for respecting the policy. Other comments have been primarily, "I did not know". We advise them and they generally put out their cigarettes.

4. Have your facility received any comments from neighbors about patients, visitors or staff leaving hospital property to smoke and to intrude on the neighborhood with noise, garbage, loitering, and so on? Please be specific.

When the policy was first implemented in November 2008, we did receive several complaints from neighbors about staff leaving hospital property and going into the neighborhood to smoke. We received a letter from a community member in March 2009 indicating that employees have been congregating for smoke breaks at the corner in front of his home. He noticed hospital staff in scrubs, white coats or with hospital badges; they even went so far as to put a white bucket with the word BUTTS labeled on it on the corner of the street in front of his home. When we received the complaint, we took immediate action and responded to the community member with the following action steps:

- Immediate removal of the "Butt" container located on the sidewalk near the home.
- Staff enforcement specifically went to the location identified to inform employees they are violating the policy.
- Employee names will be documented and reported to their supervisors in order to take disciplinary action.
- Posted a sign that informs Denver Health employees that this location is not a permissible smoking area.

While the majority of our employees are respectful of our neighbors and compliant of our policies, we feel that taking the above steps allowed us to appropriately address the employees that are choosing to violate the policy.

We have not received any complaints in the past year.

5. How did you implement your good neighbor policy? What worked and what would you change? Please send me a copy of the policy.

We were aware that some of our employees who want to use tobacco products may leave our property to do so. We advised our staff not to do this and have disciplinary protocol in place for managerial enforcement. A letter was sent to surrounding neighbors and businesses informing them of the policy change. The letter contained the name and contact information for the associate chief operations officer so they can call if a person leaves the hospital property and stands in front of or on their property; and/or would like to provide comments or concerns regarding the policy. A copy of the letter is attached.

When the policy was first implemented, we did receive some calls and emails/letters regarding individuals smoking in the neighborhoods. Please see the response to Question 4 for more specific information regarding this.

6. Based on your experiences over the past 18 months, do you have suggestions to improve the ban on smoking around City hospitals?

The majority of respondents to our survey felt that the city should renew the ordinance with 91% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. One individual disagreed, stating that it was secondary to the ordinances lack of enforceability. If the ordinance is renewed, one area of improvement is the need for improved signage that clearly expresses, through word and symbols, that smoking is banned. A second area for improvement is a need for more public awareness of the ordinance through advertising and promotion by city officials and high level hospital executives. Another theme that resonated was that the ordinance and policy “takes constant education” of both employees and visitors and a renewed effort of education would be encouraged.

7. Has the ban helped you to better serve your patients? Has it affected your professional ratings on hospital quality?

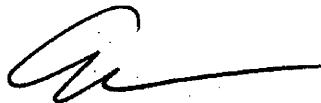
As a leading health care organization and pillar of the community, Denver Health formed its tobacco-free policy to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to the health and wellness of its employees, patients and the public. The implementation of the sidewalk ordinance in conjunction with our campus policy work synergistically to improve patient and employee health by promoting tobacco-free health care. According to one survey respondent, “It has made our campus much more conducive to patient care and the medical home.”

8. Is there anything else you think I should know about the smoking ban around City hospitals?

This ordinance has been a really big help to us in having a tobacco free campus. It is an important tool to use to interact with people and educate them about our policy, our healthcare campus, and encourage them to utilize cessation resources when they decide quit smoking.

On behalf of our tobacco prevention team, we are available for any help you may need. We look forward to the renewal of the ordinance.

Sincerely,



Christopher E. Urbina, MD, MPH
Director, Denver Public
Denver Health

cc. Dr. Patricia Gabow
Elbra Wedgeworth
Tracey Richers-Maruyama