

THE POLICY PROCESS: STEP 8

PREPARE FOR AND PRESENT TO DECISION MAKERS

The goal of Policy Step 8 is to present the case for your tobacco-free campus policy to key decision makers when the policy will be publicly and formally decided.

After you have developed your policy, created your issue briefs, developed key talking points, gotten media advocacy efforts under way, and mobilized support among individuals and groups on campus and in the community, it is time to present and defend your policy to key decision makers. This is a crucial step of the process, as it determines whether your tobacco-free campus policy will be adopted. There are steps to present an effective and strong case. Every presentation to a decision-making body should be based on what other coalitions or committees have reported regarding their experiences with presenting to them. You can also talk to decision makers who are allies or others who have observed the process and may be able to offer advice or suggestions on how to be effective. Try to be certain that the presentation's style and information will be well received by decision makers. The first thing to consider is who you are presenting to: for some campuses, it may be the Board of Trustees. For others, it may be senior administrators. Find out in advance who these

decision makers are, to determine which points should be the focus (see the textbox "Talking Points for Decision Makers" for some examples of talking points and remember; your issue brief also has key talking points included).

Once the body that will be hearing the case is identified, think about which coalition members should be at this meeting, either as presenters or supporters. Depending on the setting, a large contingent of student, faculty and staff supporters may make it clear to decision makers that this policy is broadly supported. In other instances, it may be more valuable to bring a few key individuals who either hold political clout on campus or who are strong advocates of the policy. Talk to other groups that have passed policies to see how they presented their case and if it was effective. This is a good time to interact with those who have expressed support for your policy and will carry influence with the decision makers. See if they would be willing to speak on behalf of the policy or sit in the audience to show their support. No matter who is speaking, make sure that your coalition shapes the presentation and talking points to ensure that all presenters are expressing the same message. See text box "Who Could Present Your Case?" for a list of speakers to consider. One resource your coalition can use to develop presentations is the Tobacco 101: A Community Guide powerpoint presentation series and presenter's manual developed by the NC Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch (Fulton-Smith et al., 2012). Having different voices saying the same thing is an effective way to show unified support for your cause. If the number of people who wish to speak exceeds the time allowed, find other ways for them to express their support, such as being present as silent supporters or expressing their support without detailed testimony. One strategy that is commonly used is for the primary speaker to pause in his or her presentation, and then ask anyone in support of the policy to stand up.



TALKING POINTS FOR DECISION MAKERS

- TFC policies eliminate secondhand smoke on campuses.
- Throughout the U.S., 69% of college employees prefer a smoke-free college over one that allows smoking (American Lung Association of Oregon).
- Use assessment data about how many students prefer a tobacco-free environment.
- Some colleges have experienced an increase in enrollment after going tobacco-free; none reported a decrease.

Next, choose three key arguments from your issue brief to present to the decision makers. Choose those points that, based on your knowledge of the decision makers, will have the greatest impact and be best received. Once you have picked your key arguments, practice responses to questions that the decision makers may have. Use the list of opposing arguments and responses shown in Table 7 to prepare. One useful tool to help in preparation is role-playing. Have the planned presenters state their case and have other coalition members act as the decision makers, challenging the presenters and asking potential questions. This will help the team think through opposing arguments as well as help the presenters fine-tune their presentations and prepare for discussion with the decision makers. An example of a general role-playing exercise that is not policy specific is in Appendix 17.

Once your team feels adequately prepared, think briefly about logistics. Always arrive early to ensure maximum use of your allotted time in front of the decision makers. Presenters should dress professionally and convey confidence.

Consider incorporating props into your presentation, such as a powerpoint presentation with maps of common smoking areas or a jar of cigarette butts picked up around campus to help decision makers visualize the problem. Talk to other bodies that have gone before the decision-making body and see if they have any suggestions on what you can use and what has been helpful in the past. Try to tailor your props to what has worked before.

Addressing Other Tobacco Policies

Once a campus tobacco-free policy is in place, your coalition may decide to engage in another policy campaign. Although many of the steps above are the same, there are a few key differences, such as the content of the message and the specifics of your presentation preparation. It is likely that your coalition will be presenting to a city council or other organizational entity, such as a housing board. This has implications for the types of supporters the coalition may want in attendance. When presenting to a city council, it is often valuable to bring as many supporters as possible to show solidarity from all sectors of the community.



WHO COULD PRESENT YOUR CASE?

1. Students, including:
 - Smokers
 - Minority populations
 - Those negatively impacted by tobacco
2. Faculty
3. Staff
 - Landscapers and those responsible for cleaning up cigarette butts
 - Administrators
 - Campus health staff
 - Law enforcement
4. Coalition/Committee members
5. Members of the community
 - Parents
 - High school students looking at colleges to attend
 - Lawmakers

Summary of Policy Step 8

When planning for your presentation, the most important consideration is the audience. Do some research into their backgrounds to find out their primary interests. Are they looking to save the college or university money? Are they interested in student health? Are they concerned about enrollment figures? Once their topical interests and concerns are clear, making your case can focus on those pressure points. Prepare for the presentation through role-playing activities; engage the coalition members who will be presenting so that everybody has the same basic message.