

# III. THE POLICY PROCESS

There are well-defined steps associated with advancing on- and off-campus tobacco policies. These steps are relevant when working on policies such as a tobacco-free campus or reducing the availability of tobacco products, whether on campus or at the city or county levels.

Many campuses in NC are actively working on tobacco policy, and may already have undertaken some of the steps below. While policy steps are presented sequentially, it is common to be active on multiple steps at the same time. However, all steps should be implemented at some point during the policy process.

## THE POLICY PROCESS: STEP 1

### CONDUCT ASSESSMENT

The goal of Policy Step 1 is to understand and discuss the conditions that contribute to tobacco use on campus through surveys and assessments.

**The first step in any policy process** is to understand the nature of the problem. Below we describe the types of information needed to support the necessary policy work, followed by various methods to collect such information.

First, it is useful to ask, who will do this work? Generally, the data collection phase begins with a small group of campus personnel initiating the data collection process. This initial group can consist of faculty, students and other college personnel with an interest in addressing tobacco-related problems on campus. Sometimes this group comes together somewhat spontaneously and other times the directive may originate from school officials. However the initial group forms, one of its first tasks is to begin the data collection process and identify others who may be able to assist.

#### Data Needed for the Assessment

Part of any comprehensive assessment is knowing what resources currently exist as well as collecting data defining the extent of the problem.

*How, where and by whom is tobacco used on campus?* Are students smoking in dorms? Do faculty use tobacco in their offices? Is there smoking immediately outside of buildings, creating a cloud of smoke that students, faculty and staff have to navigate to get inside?

*What are the social norms around tobacco use on campus?* What are students' beliefs about tobacco use? Students typically vastly overestimate the rate of smoking among their peers. Perhaps this is because of the visibility of smoking on college campuses. Knowing the social norms about tobacco on campus will provide useful data for your policy campaign.

#### *What tobacco-related problems exist on campus?*

Are there cigarette butts all around campus grounds or in particular areas where smokers congregate? Have smoking-related fires been an issue on campus? Are dorms in need of repainting and furniture replacement when students smoke in those rooms?

#### *What is the campus/community culture about tobacco?*

Understanding how prominent tobacco is in the lives of students, faculty and staff is essential. But it is also important