

Objective 5:

Promote Smokefree Environments

Exposure to secondhand smoke and vape aerosol remains widespread in California. Over 40% of California adults surveyed in 2019–2023 said they were exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke in the past 2 weeks, and similar percentages said they were exposed to secondhand vape aerosol or cannabis smoke.¹ Nearly a third (32.9%) of high school students surveyed in 2023 said they were exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke or vape aerosol in a car or room, and 63.8% were exposed outside.²

Secondhand smoke (SHS) is the broad term for smoke

released from a burning cigarette or other combustible tobacco and cannabis product, or aerosol released from a vaping device. SHS may also be exhaled by

someone who is using these products. Commercial tobacco smoke contains hundreds of toxic chemicals and about 70 that cause cancer.³ The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to SHS, and even brief exposure can cause serious health problems.⁴ SHS from vaping devices can also contain harmful substances.⁴ California state law prohibits vaping and cannabis smoking wherever tobacco smoking is prohibited.⁵

Thirdhand smoke (THS) is the chemical residue left behind on walls, carpet, furniture, clothing, and other surfaces after someone smokes or vapes.⁶ It is difficult to remove and can emit harmful chemicals over time as “stale tobacco smoke.”⁶ The mixture of pollutants in THS is toxic to humans, especially children, who are more likely to come into contact with contaminated surfaces or put contaminated toys and other household items in their mouths.⁶ The chemicals in THS can adhere to objects and be released back into the air or accumulate in household dust.⁶ People and pets become exposed by touching contaminated surfaces (absorption through the skin), ingesting contaminated objects or dust, or breathing air with re-suspended THS components.⁷ THS can linger indoors for months or years after someone who smokes or vapes moves out of a house or apartment, putting new tenants at risk.^{8,9}

Key Themes

- ❖ Tobacco and cannabis products harm not only those who use them, but also those who are exposed to their smoke and aerosols.
- ❖ The residue that remains on surfaces after someone has smoked or vaped presents a lingering threat to others.
- ❖ One of the most effective ways to protect public health and discourage tobacco and cannabis use is to promote smokefree environments.



**Smokefree
Worksites
Keep Everyone
Healthier**

Brochure promoting smokefree worksites.
Source: [Tobacco Education Clearinghouse of California](#) (TECC)

Local governments have made great strides in strengthening their laws promoting smokefree environments. As of January 2024, 53 jurisdictions in California have comprehensive outdoor policies regulating smoking in outdoor dining and bar areas, public events and venues, parks, public easements and service lines, and outdoor workplaces, and 400 have policies regulating smoking in at least one of these areas.¹⁰ As of the same date, 47 jurisdictions have comprehensive multi-unit housing policies prohibiting smoking and vaping in private units of properties with two or more units, without exemptions, and including outdoor areas to a specified extent, while 100 have policies that at a minimum regulate smoking in private units.¹⁰ Yet exemptions to statewide clean indoor air laws remain.¹¹

Recommended Strategies

Policy

- Regulate secondhand smoke and aerosols as toxic air contaminants.
- Close loopholes in the California Labor Code that allow smoking in tobacco shops, smokers' lounges, hookah lounges, patient smoking areas of health care facilities, cabs of trucks or tractors, theatrical stages, and other places exempted from clean air restrictions.
- Strengthen SHS laws to cover all indoor and outdoor workplaces, and outdoor public spaces, such as sidewalks and local parks.
- Avoid local ordinances that could undermine secondhand smoke laws and re-normalize tobacco product use in restaurants, bars, and other public indoor spaces by allowing cannabis and hookah lounges to serve food.
- Require disclosure of prior tobacco use in home sales, rental housing lease agreements, used car sales, and used car lease agreements, to protect new owners and tenants from THS.
- Ensure equitable enforcement of SHS and THS laws by employing social norm change strategies to achieve compliance and avoiding harsh or punitive consequences for violations, such as excessive fines and eviction from rental housing.

Education

- Educate the public on the dangers of SHS and THS.
- Educate the public about existing SHS laws, such as prohibitions on smoking and vaping within 25 feet of a playground or tot lot sandbox area, and the fact that cannabis smoking and vaping are prohibited wherever tobacco smoking and vaping are prohibited.
- Educate landlords and tenant organizations on the benefits of smokefree housing policies and the



Informational material on types of exposure to vaping.

Source: [Thirdhand Smoke Resource Center](https://thirdhandsmoke.org)

importance of equitable enforcement of these policies.

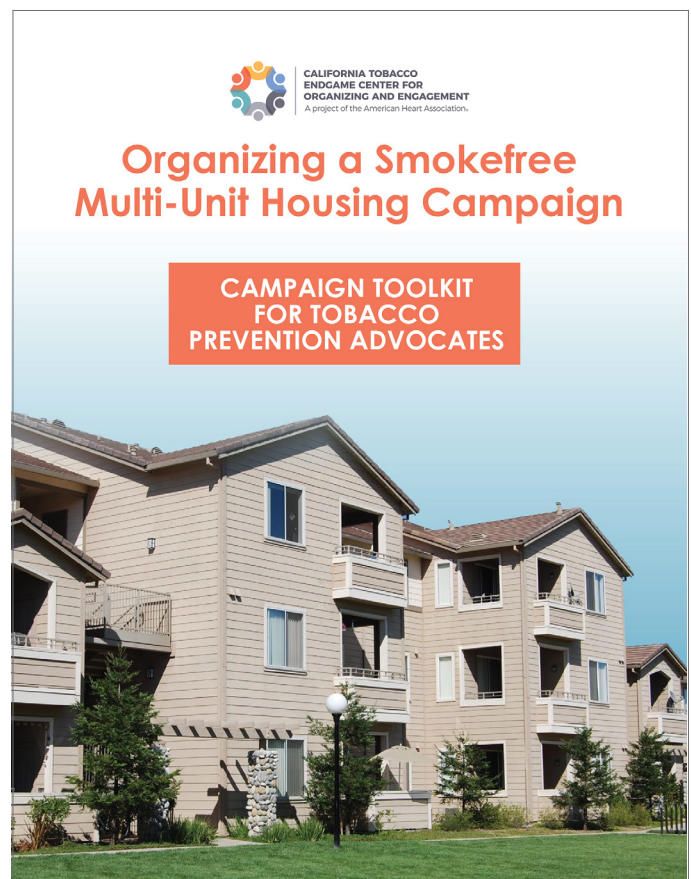
- Educate the public, especially landlords and tenants, about how secondhand smoke and aerosol travel through multi-unit housing, and how THS from past tenants can harm new tenants.

Research

- Research the health effects of exposure to SHS and THS from a wide range of tobacco and cannabis products, and from dual or poly use (i.e., use of two or multiple products).
- Research differences in exposure to SHS and THS by subpopulations.
- Research how chemicals in SHS and THS interact with other chemicals in the environment and their combined impacts on health.
- Research factors that motivate people to support or oppose SHS and THS restrictions.
- Evaluate policies and strategies for reducing SHS and THS exposure to determine the most effective and equitable practices.
- Research ways to remediate the presence of THS.

Partnership

- Support landlords and tenant organizations in developing and passing comprehensive and equitable smokefree multi-unit housing policies.
- Partner with landlords, real estate agencies, used car dealers, nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders to increase disclosure of prior tobacco use to home buyers and renters and used car buyers and lessees.
- Partner with community groups to increase awareness of interactions between SHS, THS, and other chemicals in the environment and advocate for policies and strategies to reduce exposure.
- Support Tribal leaders who wish to strengthen their smokefree laws, such as by restricting commercial tobacco use in public indoor spaces or prohibiting its use in recreational areas.



Toolkit for organizing a smokefree multi-unit housing campaign.

Source: [California Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement](#)

References

- ¹ California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Prevention Program. [California Tobacco Facts and Figures 2024](#). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Public Health; 2024.
- ² Clodfelter R, Dutra LM, Bradfield B, Russell S, Levine B, von Jaglinsky A. [Annual results report for the California Youth Tobacco Survey 2023](#). Berkeley, CA: RTI International; 2024.
- ³ US Department of Health and Human Services. [The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2014.
- ⁴ US Department of Health and Human Services. [E-cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2016.
- ⁵ California Labor Code § 6464.5.
- ⁶ Thirdhand Smoke Resource Center. [Frequently asked questions](#).
- ⁷ American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation. [Thirdhand Smoke Harms People Even After Smoking Stops](#). American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation.
- ⁸ Matt GE, Merianos AL, Quintana PJ, Hoh E, Dodder NG, Mahabee-Gittens EM. [Prevalence and income-related disparities in thirdhand smoke exposure to children](#). *JAMA Network Open*. 2022;5(2):e2147184–e2147184.
- ⁹ Jacob III P, Benowitz NL, Destailats H, et al. [Thirdhand smoke: new evidence, challenges, and future directions](#). *Chem Res Toxicol*. 2017;30(1):270–294.
- ¹⁰ California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Prevention Program. [California Tobacco Facts and Figures 2024](#). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Public Health; 2024.
- ¹¹ California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Prevention Program. [Smokefree protections in the workplace and electronic smoking devices: a summary for employers and owner-operated businesses](#). 2024.