

Objective 5: Smokefree Environments

Tobacco use in California is declining, but the secondary impacts of tobacco—secondhand smoke (SHS)—still pose risks for smokers and nonsmokers alike.¹ SHS exposes nonsmokers to the same airborne toxins inhaled by people who smoke.²⁴ Chemicals from tobacco smoke can continue to linger indoors and expose children, adults, and pets to toxic thirdhand smoke (THS) for months or years after a smoker has moved out of a shared residence.^{25,26} Making California free from all tobacco harms means closing loopholes in indoor and outdoor clean air laws and funding more research on chemicals from tobacco smoke and aerosol to better understand the impacts of SHS and THS.

Key Concepts

Secondhand Smoke (SHS) is the exhaled and side-stream smoke or aerosol from any lighted or heated tobacco or plant product. This includes natural or synthetic tobacco or plant products like cannabis. When nonsmokers are exposed to SHS, they inhale the same harmful chemicals that smokers do. Secondhand tobacco smoke is known to cause cancer, and there is no safe level of exposure.²⁷

Thirdhand Smoke (THS) is the tobacco pollution (e.g., gases, particles) that persists in the air and sticks to surfaces like carpet, walls, furniture, blankets, and toys after smoking has stopped. THS is not strictly smoke, but chemicals that adhere to objects from which they can be released back into the air or accumulate in house dust, so people can be exposed by touching contaminated surfaces (absorption through the skin), by eating contaminated objects or dust, and by breathing in air and re-suspended THS components.²⁸



Key Themes

- Reduce exposure to SHS and THS.
- Close loopholes in existing clean air laws.
- Conduct research on cannabis and tobacco SHS and THS.

Strategies

Policy

- Evaluate SHS and emissions from e-cigarettes and cannabis products as toxic air contaminants and regulate as appropriate.
- Close loopholes that allow smoking in hotels, tobacco shops and smokers' lounges, hookah lounges, patient smoking areas of healthcare facilities, cabs of trucks or tractors, theatrical stages, and other places exempted from clean air restrictions.
- Prevent SHS exposure by strengthening smokefree policies, including outdoor workplaces, outdoor public spaces, and multi-unit housing.
- Ensure that existing laws on smokefree environments are not threatened by exemptions for smoking or vaping cannabis in places like cannabis lounges or multiunit housing.
- Explore ways to prevent THS exposure, including prohibitions on smoking and required disclosure of tobacco use by previous tenants in rental agreements.
- Review SHS laws and policies to find best practices for improving compliance and ensure equitable implementation of policies.

Education

- Provide education to landlords on the benefits of smokefree housing and equitable enforcement of these types of policies.
- Educate tenants about how SHS travels through walls and can harm other tenants, and how THS can harm future tenants.

Research

- Research how THS exposure affects children and adults, and potential disparities in exposure.
- Research effective and equitable ways to mitigate exposure to SHS and THS, including whether requiring disclosure of tobacco/cannabis smoking or vaping by previous tenants in rental agreements would reduce THS exposure.

Partnerships

- Support landlords in developing comprehensive and equitable smokefree multiunit housing policies.

