

# Learning the ABCs of Prevention

## A Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story

### At a Glance:

ABC Behave is a Portland based behavioral health practice that improves the lives of families by working at the core of the family unit, incorporating scientifically based interventions, and supporting the growth of family relationships through supportive measures. In March 2021, ABC Behave and Portland Public Health partnered to ensure that client families have access to clean air while receiving behavioral support services.

### Public Health Challenge:

According to the National Behavioral Health Network, individuals with behavioral health conditions account for almost 40% of all traditional cigarettes smoked by adults.

It's important to consider that ABC Behave provides cognitive support to individuals between the ages of 0 to 21. Nearly 9 out of 10 adults who smoke cigarettes daily first try smoking *by age 18*, well within the age bracket of ABC Behave's client population.

The leadership team at ABC Behave recognizes the importance of combatting the normalization of tobacco use and maintaining strong prevention strategies to encourage their clients to pursue healthy lives.

### Approach:

In February 2021, ABC Behave relocated from Houlton to Portland, Maine. Portland Public Health took this opportunity to reach out and welcome them to their new location and offer free technical assistance to help improve their tobacco policy and to provide free signage. In addition to providing a comprehensive policy and new signage, Portland Public Health assisted ABC Behave to establish a protocol that prohibits employees from using tobacco in personal vehicles used for transporting clients during work hours. Establishing this new protocol not only protects clients from thirdhand smoke, but also combats the normalization of tobacco use. Employees adjusting to this change in policy were connected with our evidence based tobacco treatment resources - the Maine QuitLink.

### Results:

Adopting a 100% tobacco free policy is the only way to protect workers, visitors, and clients from the effects of secondhand and thirdhand smoke. There is no amount of cleaning, ventilating or creating separate areas for smokers that negates the effect of secondhand smoke - this especially in vehicles! Moving forward, our Portland Public Health tobacco prevention team will assist ABC Behave with submitting their application for Gold Star Standard Excellence recognition!



**"Adopting a tobacco policy was a lot less complicated than I thought it would be - and the signs look great!**

**Thank you for all the resources!**

**Diane Hardy, Managing Director of ABC Behave**



Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention  
Department of Health and Human Services

For more information contact us at:

City of Portland  
Public Health Division  
[kfaucher@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:kfaucher@portlandmaine.gov)



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