

# The Gatherings Supports Their Community's Health with a Comprehensive Smoke and Tobacco-Free Policy

## Summary

The Gatherings is a community center in Surry, Maine which recently approved a new, comprehensive smoke and tobacco-free policy. It will help to protect the health and well-being of all of their community members and facility visitors, from the very young to the very old, through the elimination of exposure to secondhand smoke at their facility.

## Need/ Issue (or "Challenge")

In Maine in 2020, 16.5 percent of adults smoked tobacco. Of the 7,000 chemicals found in tobacco smoke, 69 are known carcinogens. No safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke exists. Secondhand smoke is detrimental to human health; it increases a non-smoker's risk of developing asthma, lung cancer and heart disease and can cause serious health problems in children.



## Intervention/ Program Description



The Gatherings' board members include youth representatives; board members and Healthy Acadia's tobacco prevention team worked together through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic to design a smoke and tobacco-free policy for the community center. This comprehensive policy puts community health front and center and reflects their firm commitment to supporting their community, by sharing knowledge and resources, fostering cooperation, and promoting learning at all levels and in all ways.

*"We're pleased to be prioritizing tobacco use prevention at The Gatherings as part of our mission to enhance and improve our community in all ways."*

*– Sharon Minogue, Board Chairman*



## Results/ Success

The Gatherings' new policy integrates with their health programming, local foods support, and environmental sustainability focus to protect and improve the well-being of over 7000 annual visitors and their families. By supporting social norms limiting tobacco use, they are also helping to protect the 1,632 residents of this small but vibrant Maine town.

## Sustainability

According to the 2020 American Community Survey, 65% of all Maine communities have populations of 2,000 people or less. In these conditions, community centers are a valuable and easily accessible forum to reach, educate, inform, and protect a wide range of community members. Creating smoke-free environments in all communities, rural or urban, is recognized as a highly effective policy intervention by the US CDC in its *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs*.

## For More Information Contact Us At:

Healthy Acadia  
tobacco@healthyacadia.org  
207-667-7171  
www.healthyacadia.org

