

# Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story

Maine Tobacco Prevention Program Protects Young Children with Smoke-Free Childcare Policies

## Summary

The Center for Tobacco Independence's (CTI) Tobacco Prevention Program supported their local district teams to engage small, rural childcare centers to pass comprehensive smoke and/or tobacco-free policies that protect infants and young children from secondhand and thirdhand smoke. Rural childcare centers play a key role in making families aware of the harms of nicotine use, secondhand and thirdhand smoke. Childcare centers with comprehensive smoke-free policies communicate about the policies, enforce them and also share resources with families. A written 100% tobacco and nicotine-free policy in a childcare center protects the children, staff, and visitors from secondhand and thirdhand smoke as well as nicotine poison.

## Need/ Issue

Infants and children exposed to second and thirdhand smoke toxins are at a higher risk of health issues, including SIDS, acute respiratory infections, ear infections, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and asthma. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 100% tobacco-free environment in the child care setting. Maine is a rural state and many of the childcare centers are small and based in homes, yet they are all required to be smoke-free based on Maine law (22 MRS §1542).



## Intervention

The district teams were creative in their outreach, meeting childcare center staff at training workshops, using mobile printers and being responsive with resources for parent education. They learned that staff were busy but motivated so they designed approaches to support them with policy development to minimize the time it would take to create policies. The CTI childcare policy templates made the process easy for them and this was essential. This successful approach was shared statewide by CTI to expand the protection of young children.

*"We have parents that are smokers and no one drives in or out of the parking lot smoking anymore. I believe that secondhand smoke affects the children. It can make them more sick. With this policy, it encourages parents, grandparents, and guardians to be more mindful."*  
Brittany Robinson, Owner/Manager, Tree House Tots Childcare, Machias, Maine."



## Results/ Success

Between December, 2016 and October, 2022, CTI provided training and technical assistance to our local district partners on the policy development process and the importance of smoke-free childcare policies. This collective effort resulted in **192 childcare centers** across Maine passing comprehensive smoke and/or tobacco-free policies. These rural childcare centers received parent education, Smoke-Free Homes Pledges, resources and free signage to promote, communicate and enforce their new policy with staff, visitors and families. **Over 6,000 children are protected by these policy efforts** and this includes almost 1,000 staff members as well as the families of children enrolled in the childcare centers. The majority of these childcare centers are home-based with fewer than 5 staff members.

**For More Information Contact Us At:**  
Center for Tobacco Independence  
110 Free St, Portland, ME 04101  
ctimaine.org (207) 662 - 7154

MaineHealth  
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Department of Health and Human Services