

# The Board of Health's Role in Supporting Smokefree Communities

Local Boards of Health can be a great ally in support of smokefree communities. As representatives for the health of the community, board of health members can be the tipping point in smoke-free air efforts as many county commissioners look to them for policy advice on protecting the public's health.

The National Association of Boards of Health (NALBOH) adopted a resolution in 2009 to support smokefree air laws that protect ALL individuals from secondhand smoke (including employees from bars, restaurants, private and public workplaces and casinos).

NALBOH as well as many other national and local health organizations (U.S. Surgeon General, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Lung Association, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, etc.) recognize that there is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke. The use of ventilation or allowing smoking rooms is NOT effective in protecting workers from secondhand smoke carcinogens. A **comprehensive** smokefree air policy (includes all workplaces and does not include any exemptions) is the most effective way to protect everyone from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

**\$390 million =  
annual economic  
impact of  
secondhand  
smoke in Indiana**

## Recommendations for boards of health in smokefree air ordinance efforts:

1. All members of the board of health should study the research and understand the benefits of a smokefree air policy that protects ALL workers. Contact the Indiana Association for Local Boards of Health (InALBOH) for key resources on secondhand smoke and smokefree air policy (317.221.3138).
2. Identify a champion on the board of health and a champion among the commissioners to work together throughout the policymaking process. These champions should be willing to stop the ordinance if it is less than comprehensive.
3. It is important to have a board of health member introduce the ordinance to the commissioners in order to demonstrate support of the board of health from the beginning. This board member can answer questions that the commissioners may have on the purpose of the ordinance and the value of it being comprehensive.
4. The board of health member who introduces the ordinance should also be prepared to give background information at the introduction and to testify at the hearing to further educate the commissioners on the importance of a comprehensive ordinance and why the board supports one.
5. All board of health members and the health officer should be present at the introductory meeting and subsequent meetings to reinforce their support for the comprehensive ordinance.
6. If the leadership in the county does not seem ready for a county-wide policy, starting with a city ordinance is a good strategy. The influence of the local board of health would be valued at the city level as well.

**There is no safe level of secondhand smoke.**