



Grandfathering Policies: Tips for Managers

When a building adopts a smoke-free policy, the question of whether or not to allow current residents to continue to smoke in their unit often arises. This practice is referred to as “grandfathering” smokers. There are two types of grandfathering policies:

Temporary Grandfathering:

Allows some residents to continue smoking for a short amount of time after the policy goes into effect.

Indefinite Grandfathering:

Allows some residents to continue smoking permanently, or until they move out.



Grandfathering residents who smoke may feel like a fair practice, however, there are concerns that may arise by permitting the practice:

Delayed Benefits

There are many benefits to adopting a smoke-free policy including lower cleaning costs, reduced fire risk, potential insurance savings, and protecting the health of residents, staff, and guests. Grandfathering current smokers delays these benefits.

Enforcement Complications

Allowing some residents to smoke indoors and not others, can make it hard for management to determine where the activity of smoking is occurring and whether it is in violation of the policy.

Resident Complaints

New residents moving in may feel misled, and current residents who are sensitive to secondhand smoke will continue to be exposed, both of which may lead to complaints.

To avoid the concerns listed above, completely prohibit smoking in the building and do not grandfather current smokers beyond their lease renewal.



If grandfathering is necessary, allow it only on a temporary basis. Be clear about the terms of the temporary exemption to current and new residents, and require smokers who are exempted to sign paperwork outlining that the policy applies only to them, their unit, and for a designated period of time.

Contact Live Smoke Free for a sample temporary grandfathering form.

Live Smoke Free
Smoke-Free Multi-Housing

651-646-3005 | www.mnsmokefreehousing.org



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