

TOBACCO POLICY

Rationale

The Voorheesville Central School District recognizes its responsibility to promote the health, welfare and safety of students, staff and others on school property and at school-sponsored activities. It also recognizes the use of tobacco in any form poses serious and long-term health risks to individuals. Research conclusively proves that:

- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States;
- Regular use of tobacco is ultimately harmful to every user's health, directly causing cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, adverse pregnancy outcomes, and premature death;
- Second-hand smoke is a threat to the personal health of everyone, especially persons with asthma and other respiratory problems;
- Nicotine is a powerfully addictive substance;
- Tobacco use most often begins during childhood or adolescence;
- Many young tobacco users will die an early, preventable death because of their decision to use tobacco.
- Use of tobacco interferes with students' attendance and learning;
- The younger a person starts using tobacco, the more likely he or she will be a heavy user as an adult; and
- Smoking is a fire safety issue for schools.

Through the collaborative efforts of faculty, administration, staff, students, parents/guardians and the community as a whole, a comprehensive program shall be developed addressing the use and promotion of tobacco products. This program will endeavor to include cessation programs, alternative to suspension programs, and community intervention programs.

This program will reinforce and support comprehensive K-12 tobacco education instruction. It will also insure compliance to all applicable laws, including Pro-Children Act 2001, Section 4301 (Non-Smoking Policy for Children Services); the NYS Clean Indoor Air Act; the NYS Public Health Law, Section 1399-0; and Education Law 409.

Definitions

Tobacco: For the purposes of this policy, tobacco is defined to include any lit or unlit cigarette, cigar, cigarillo, pipe, bidi, clove cigarette, spit tobacco (smokeless, dip, chew, and/or snuff), and any other tobacco product in any form. Also included is any paraphernalia relating to tobacco use such as lighters, matches, and rolling papers.

School Property: Any building, structure or vehicle owned, leased, or contracted by Voorheesville Central School District.

School Grounds: Any building or structure, athletic playing field, playground, parking lot or any other outdoor property owned, leased or contracted by the Voorheesville Central School district together with the area within 1,000 feet of said real property boundary line.

General

Prohibition of Tobacco Promotional Items/Tobacco Advertising: Tobacco promotional items with brand names, advertising logos or any other identifiers with tobacco advertising are prohibited on school grounds, in school vehicles, school supplies, and in school publications, including but not limited to, print, yearbook, video, photograph, and graphic design. Students and staff are prohibited from wearing clothing, shoes, accessories, and gear promoting tobacco products on school property and school grounds. The Voorheesville Central School District will strive to request tobacco-free editions of all publications in school libraries and classrooms.

Posting of Signs: Signs that outline the tobacco policy prohibiting all forms of tobacco use at any time will be posted at all primary entrances to school buildings used by the public and on school grounds where appropriate. A complete copy of this policy will be accessible in the main office and on the district website <http://vcsd.neric.org/> for those who wish to view or obtain a copy.

Announcements: Announcements that cover the policy shall be made at school sponsored events, wherever it is practical to do so.

Dissemination: Students, parents/guardians, faculty, staff, and the community will annually be informed about the District's Tobacco-Free policy through such means as reminder palm cards, orientation meetings, class meetings, parent/student handbooks, faculty/staff meetings, newsletters, Codes of Conduct, and the district web site.

Enforcement: All administrators, faculty, and staff will be encouraged to enforce the tobacco policy. Students will be encouraged to inform school employees if they encounter tobacco use on the premises but are not expected to confront violators. Violators will be subject to disciplinary review and removal from school events if they are students or staff, or may be asked to leave school grounds or the school event if they are members of the public.

Collaboration: School nurses, intervention staff, health educators, interested teachers and staff, and appropriate community agencies will work to promote tobacco-free lifestyles through the use of such things as bulletin boards, pamphlets, announcements, cessation programs, and other information sources to students, staff, faculty, parents/guardians, and the community.

Students:

Tobacco Use is Prohibited

Possession/Use: Possession or use of tobacco or related items by students at any time on school property or at school-sponsored events at off-site facilities is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, inside all school buildings, surrounding outdoor grounds within school property boundaries, in school owned or leased vehicles, in vehicles on school property, and at all school-sponsored events that occur off school property. All district students have the responsibility to avoid possession, consumption, sales, distribution, or exchange of tobacco and tobacco related products, such as chewing or “spit” tobacco.

Primary Prevention: Teaching the consequences of tobacco use and prevention strategies will assist all constituent groups in making good choices for healthy living.

- A. Preventing tobacco use will be a primary component of a comprehensive K-12 Health Education Program. The program will be incorporated into the total educational process and will be concerned with education and prevention.
- B. Information will be disseminated to teachers, parents, and community members regarding tobacco prevention through such means as newsletters, internet links, the district website, and workshops.
- C. Positive alternatives for students such as extra-curricular activities, leadership programs such as Natural Helpers, SADD, Character Education, Reality Check, and other school events that promote positive activities in tobacco-free environments will be provided.

Intervention: The intent of intervention is to eliminate any existing use of tobacco and to provide support services for those students in grades K-12 who demonstrate that they use tobacco or are at a high risk for usage. The components of intervention will include, but will not be limited to:

- A. Providing cessation counseling such as the Tobacco Awareness Program and/or referral to community agencies for students who have demonstrated use or requested cessation assistance.
- B. Educating parents and guardians through information distribution regarding the District’s intervention services.

Disciplinary Measures: Disciplinary measures for students found to be using or who are in possession of tobacco products will be defined by the school’s Code of Conduct.

A Tobacco Education Program may be offered as an alternative to suspension at the discretion of the administration. Students who are disciplined for any tobacco related offense will be offered the opportunity to complete a smoking cessation program at the first incident of violation of the policy.

Staff:

Tobacco Use is Prohibited

Possession/Use: All District employees will not use tobacco in any form or at any time within district buildings, on school grounds, while using school owned or leased vehicles, in vehicles while on school property or while at school events off campus, or any other time while they are acting as representatives of the school. Communication for staff of the policy will be through staff meetings, e-mail, and building staff handbooks.

Discipline Measures: Employees who violate this policy may be subject to the full range of appropriate penalties or disciplinary action according to the regulations outlined in the VTA and UEV negotiated agreements. Employees not included under the negotiated agreements will be subject to action as deemed appropriate by the administration.

Cessation Groups/Counseling: Employees who violate the tobacco policy or who voluntarily seek assistance will be provided with information on available smoking cessation programs.

Staff Training: Staff training will be an on-going process including but not limited to the following:

A. Training for staff:

1. Training in tobacco awareness in order to understand the importance of implementing and enforcing a comprehensive tobacco policy and the devastating effects of tobacco use on themselves and the youth they serve.
2. Training in policy awareness training and their role in following and enforcing of the District's tobacco policy, including how to make disciplinary referrals and how and when to approach visitors who violate the policy.
3. Training in how to access and disseminate information for cessation to students or staff seeking voluntary intervention services.
4. Training in awareness of personal risk factors for tobacco use, so that they may identify personal use/abuse problems and seek assistance.

B. For teachers of the Health curriculum: The knowledge and skills necessary to implement the District's K-12 tobacco education and prevention curriculum.

C. For the intervention staff: Appropriate staff training to those identified responsible for the intervention function to assure that their assessment, individual, group, and family counseling, and referral skills support the needs of students/staff who are using tobacco products. Appropriate staff training for those identified to be TATU (Teens Against Tobacco Use) Facilitators to assure an effective prevention program.

Visitors:

Tobacco Use is Prohibited

All visitors will not use tobacco in any form or at any time within district buildings, on school grounds, while using school owned or leased vehicles, in vehicles while on school property, or while at school events. Any visitor found in violation of this policy will be given a reminder/palm card of the district policy. If the violation continues, the visitor will be asked to leave the grounds. If the person refuses to leave the property or is a repeat offender, the person may be referred to the Albany County Law Enforcement and the appropriate measures may be taken by that agency.

Development, Review and Monitoring of Policy:

Development: The Comprehensive Tobacco Policy was developed by the District's School Health Advisory Council and submitted to the Board of Education for consideration.

Reviews and Monitoring: The District's School Health Advisory Council will annually review the Comprehensive Tobacco Policy and make recommendations for change. Additionally, the committee will review the compliance with the policy and report to the Superintendent and the Board of Education.

District School Health Advisory Council: The Council has a broad-based membership including administrators, teachers, support personnel, students, parents, community members/agencies, a board member, and medical professionals. It meets a minimum of four times during the school year.

Cross References:

Voorheesville District Code of Conduct
Student Guidelines
VTA Negotiated Agreement
UEV Negotiated Agreement
Elementary School Teacher Handbook
Faculty Handbook

First Reading: April 2, 2007

Approved: May 7, 2007