Smoking-Related Attitudes and Behaviors Among University of Hawai‘i - Manoa Custodial, Maintenance, and Grounds Service Employees

*Prepared for the Community Partnership for Health and Fresh Air*

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The Community Partnership for Health and Fresh Air is a partnership of University of Hawai‘i community members engaged in promoting a meaningful and appropriate system-wide tobacco products policy.

Our mission is to help everyone in the University community including students, faculty, and staff to not start using tobacco products, to quit using tobacco products if they wish to, and to not be exposed to tobacco smoke.
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

SMOKING STATUS

- Only 22% of surveyed employees surveyed are current smokers

SECOND HAND SMOKE EXPOSURE

- 85% surveyed report exposure on campus within past week
  - 91% exposed at building courtyards, 80% at building entrances, and 80% in outdoor dining courtyards.
- 77% surveyed are bothered by second hand smoke exposure
  - Even 31% of current smokers bothered*
- 40% have specific health problems affected by smoke exposure
  - 24% have asthma or other respiratory illnesses
  - 16% have allergies or other particular sensitivities
  - 18% had an occasion where they felt ill due to second hand smoke exposure in the past year

POLICY SUPPORT

- Over 70% of employees surveyed support prohibitions on
  - Smoking near intake ducts
  - Smoking in building entrances
- Over 50% of employees surveyed support prohibitions on
  - Smoking in dormitories
  - Smoking at UH-sponsored athletic events
  - Tobacco product sales on campus

CESSATION SUPPORT

- 79% of current smokers very or somewhat interested in quitting*
- 73% of current smokers very or somewhat likely to use UH services*
- 87% of all respondents would support having UH sponsored tobacco cessation services

* Note: Analysis of opinions held by current smokers must be interpreted with caution owing to small sample size.
Background and Method

Self-administered surveys were conducted with 137 employees at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa in early May. Upon request from the CPHFA, survey questionnaires were distributed through the Office of Building and Grounds Management to all of its employees working at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa campus. Out of the 240 questionnaires distributed, a total of 137 completed surveys were returned. Thus, the survey’s response rate is approximately 57%.

Sample Description

Of the 137 respondents, 93% were custodial staff, 5% grounds staff, and 1% maintenance staff. According to the data provided by the Office of Building and Grounds Management, custodial staff constitutes approximately 71% of the Building and Grounds Management workforce at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. Thus, custodial staff is overrepresented in the current sample in comparison to grounds and maintenance staff.

Approximately 16% of the respondents were supervisor level staff. The sample was balanced in terms of gender: 52% of the sample was female compared to 48% male. The length of time employed by UHM ranged between 2 months and 28 years, and the average length of employment for the respondents was 7 years and 7 months.

Findings

Smoking Status

Twenty-nine out of the 286 respondents (22%) reported being a current smoker compared to 19% ex-smokers and 59% non-smokers. Among the current smokers, the number of cigarettes smoked on a typical day ranged between 1 and 35 cigarettes. The average number of cigarettes smoked per day was 14 cigarettes.
Interest in Cessation Services among Current Smokers

A total of 79% of current smokers reported that they were “very interested” or “somewhat interested” in quitting smoking. When asked whether they would be likely to use a smoking cessation service if provided by the University, 73% reported that they are “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to use the service.

When asked what types of method they would consider using, 74% reported that they would be somewhat or very likely to use medicine that help with craving (such as Zyban), 67% would be somewhat or very likely to use Nicotine Replacement Therapy (such as nicotine gum, patch or inhaler), and 63% would be likely to use individual counseling. The most popular choice for the location of cessation service was on campus (41%), followed by at their doctor’s office or in a hospital (33%).

Exposure to Second Hand Smoke on Campus

Exposure to second hand smoke is extremely prevalent among these UHM employees. 85% reported that they were exposed to second hand smoke within just the past week. Similarly, when asked more particularly about exposure within the past year, 77% reported that they were exposed to second hand smoke while entering their work area or in other indoor areas of campus. Frequency also runs high. 17% reported being exposed “all the time,” 20% reported “frequently,” and another 40% reported “occasionally.”
As for the pattern of exposure to second hand smoke, the most frequent exposure is reported to be at building courtyards (91%), followed by building entrances (80%) and outdoor dining areas (80%).

Overall, 38% of the respondents reported that they are bothered “a great deal” about being exposed to second hand smoke; an additional 39% reported they are “somewhat” bothered by it. As expected, current smokers were significantly less bothered by exposure to second hand smoke. However it should be noted that while 90% of non-smokers and ex-smokers reported that exposure to second hand smoke bothered them, 31% of current smokers reported that they are bothered by it as well.

Health Consequences of Exposure to Second Hand Smoke

Exposure to second hand smoke has a significant negative impact on workers’ health on campus. A total of 40% of the respondents reported that they have health problems affected by exposure to second hand smoke. Specifically, 24% of the respondents reported that they have asthma or other respiratory illness that is affected by exposure to tobacco smoke, and additional 16% reported that they have an allergy or sensitivity that is affected by exposure to tobacco smoke. Moreover, 18% of the respondents reported that they had an occasion where they felt ill due to the exposure to tobacco smoke on campus in the past year.
Labor Associated with Cigarette Clean-up

When asked about how much time employees usually spend in a typical week for cleaning up cigarette butts, 49% reported that they spent some time for emptying ashtrays, 55% for picking up discarded cigarette butts on campus grounds, and 56% for sweeping and cleaning up cigarette butts and ashes in buildings. The amount of time spent doing these activities vary a great deal ranging from 1 minute to 100 hours per week. The following graph shows the distribution of time spent for each activity.

Note. Entries are percentages.
Support for Regulating Smoking and Tobacco Products

Overall, as shown in the following table, the level of support varies for various areas of regulation for tobacco product and smoking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Should be Prohibited(%)</th>
<th>Should be Permitted(%)</th>
<th>Not Sure(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoking near air intake ducts</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking in building entrances on campus</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking in dormitories</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking at UH sponsored athletic events</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco product sale on campus</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking in outdoor dining areas on campus</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking in building courtyards and breeze ways</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking in outdoor areas of campus</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that smoking status plays an important role in peoples’ attitudes regarding various regulations for smoking and tobacco use. Specifically, compared to current smokers, non-smokers are significantly more likely to want to prohibit smoking in various areas of campus. The only exception to this pattern was smoking near air intake ducts. Current smokers were as likely to support prohibition smoking near air intake ducts as non-smokers.

The results also reflect a spirit of aloha towards smokers in the community even among the many non-smokers who are bothered by smoke exposure. For example, a very large majority of respondents regardless of their smoking status hope for tobacco cessation services for employees (87%) on campus. Moreover, strongest support was seen for policy changes involving relatively smaller limits on smoking-permitted areas. As for broader areas, compassionate concerns may be apparent simply because the survey questions did not allow for the creation of appropriate new spaces for smokers, such as rain shelters, which would be highly advised in implementing these kinds of changes.