



UCLA-SAFE

## Frequently Asked Questions About UCLA-S.A.F.E Project Audience: Landlords

### **Q. *What does this project entail?***

**A.** UCLA-Smokefree Air for Everyone (UCLA-SAFE) is a three-year project aimed at increasing access to smokefree apartments in low-income neighborhoods in the city of Los Angeles. UCLA-SAFE is sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health](#) (REACH) initiative through a grant to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

### **Q. *What are the main objectives of this project?***

**A.** Smokefree apartments is one of the most effective ways to improve the lives of thousands of Angelenos. Many families, children and seniors in low-income communities live in apartments where they are vulnerable to illnesses related to secondhand smoke. Latino and African Americans who suffer high rates of chronic illnesses are particularly at-risk. Air filtration and ventilation systems alone are ineffective at removing harmful particulate matter and cancer causing gases from drifting tobacco smoke.

Smokefree apartments also improve safety and reduce maintenance costs, enhancing property value and appeal to renters. In early 2016, UCLA-SAFE will launch **Smokefree Apartments Los Angeles**, an initiative to inform apartment owners and residents about the benefits of smokefree living. Working in partnership with the Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles, UCLA-SAFE will provide assistance to landlords and management companies on how to simplify and streamline the process of establishing voluntary policies to restrict smoking in apartment buildings.

**Q. Why should I consider converting my apartment building into a non-smoking property?**

**A.** Apartment buildings with smoke-free policies are a win-win. They protect residents' health, while also helping to protect owners' investment. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that studies on health and smokefree housing found that most tenants prefer smokefree apartments and desire protections from exposing their family to second hand smoke. Voluntary non-smoking policies reduce tenants' exposure to hazardous secondhand smoke, which often seeps from one unit to the next via doors and windows (even when they are closed). It also drifts from electrical fixtures and outlets, balconies and patios, as well as through ventilation systems and even walls. Furthermore, secondhand smoke is a health hazard that can potentially lead to liability.

There are many financial benefits for landlords to incorporate smokefree policies into their business practices. Structural losses from smoking-related fires are estimated to cost millions of dollars each year. Additionally, smoking-related property damage leads to costly cleaning and repairs needed to prepare smoked-in units for new tenants.

In a joint report, CA4Health and ChangeLab Solutions state the average cost of turning over a smokefree unit is \$5,000 less than turning over a unit where past tenants smoked. Also, smoking-related costs such as painting, repairing walls, ceilings and fixtures and replacing carpeting can reach as high as \$15,000. Lower property insurance premiums are another potential benefit to apartment owners. The National Apartment Association reports that some insurance companies offer discounts on fire, life, liability and property insurance to multi-unit housing complexes that have adopted smokefree policies.

Through this project, landlords will have the needed tools to adopt sensible voluntary smoking regulations to reconcile the needs of people who smoke, and the wishes of non-smokers to be protected from secondhand smoke. Voluntary smokefree policies will also include provisions to resolve tenant disputes.

**Q. How can I get assistance to turn my apartment building into a non-smoking facility?**

**A.** The Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles in collaboration with UCLA-SAFE is offering education and informational seminars for members on the advantages of smokefree apartments that result in added property value, lower maintenance costs

and improved quality-of-life for tenants. For assistance, please call (213) 384-4130, Ext. 704, or email [art@aagla.org](mailto:art@aagla.org).

***Q. Won't restricting smoking in my apartment building cause me to lose business?***

**A.** Studies show a majority of tenants want to live in non-smoking units, as it's an amenity that people desire. As such, that will make your units more marketable. It's important to know that a voluntary non-smoking policy does not mean an apartment cannot be rented to a person who smokes. It just means the person cannot smoke inside that apartment.

***Q. What about e-cigarette and marijuana smoke?***

**A.** The UCLA-SAFE project focuses on tobacco smoke. However, we recognize your residents may have expressed concern about exposure to smoke from e-cigarettes and marijuana. You may also have questions about the legality of regulating them in your properties. For answers to these questions, please contact Project Manager Marlene Gomez at [margomez@ucla.edu](mailto:margomez@ucla.edu).

***Q. Are there any legal ramifications to restricting smoking in apartment buildings?***

**A.** No. In fact, in 2012, the state expanded the availability of smokefree housing in California by officially acknowledging landlords' rights to restrict smoking in rental units. The law formally allows such a change without jeopardizing compliance with all federal, state and local requirements, including rent stabilization laws and governing changes to the terms of rental or lease agreements.

***Q. I have taken steps to reduce secondhand smoke. Isn't that enough?***

**A.** In many cases, air filtration and ventilation systems have proven to be ineffective. Tobacco smoke emits particulate matter and gases, and a filtration system can remove most particulate matter, but is ineffective in removing the cancer causing gases. This is a problem because many of the gases are odorless, and therefore, the devices provide a false sense of security. Hence, apartment tenants are at-risk for continual exposure to secondhand smoke at levels often exceeding U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards.

Made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There's also the concern over the effects on health from thirdhand smoke, which is the residual nicotine and other chemicals left on indoor surfaces by tobacco smoke. This residue is thought to react with common indoor pollutants to create a toxic mix. This toxic mix contains cancer-causing substances, posing a potential health hazard to non-smokers who are exposed to it. Infants, children and non-smoking adults may be at risk of tobacco-related health problems when they inhale, ingest or touch substances containing thirdhand smoke. Thirdhand smoke is also a burdensome issue when it comes to maintenance and liability. It's very expensive to remove, and there's no guarantee all toxins will be gone.

***Q. What about the impact of smokefree practices on existing tenants who smoke?***

**A.** Concerns have been raised about potential unintended consequences of smokefree practices, including unfair impacts on tenants who smoke. In all cases, a smokefree housing practice can be tailored to be fair, legal and humane to tenants who smoke. It's also important to know that a person who smokes can live in a non-smoking unit, but simply cannot smoke inside that apartment.

***Q. Smoking rates are higher in low-income communities. Won't making apartments non-smoking discriminate against people who live in these communities?***

**A.** Actually, non-smoking regulations would be especially beneficial to low-income individuals and families. For instance, the prevalence of asthma is higher among lower-income households, and exposure to tobacco smoke makes asthma worse. Also, individuals and families with lower incomes have less access to adequate healthcare, and a limited income makes it more difficult to move from a smoke-filled unit. Providing low-income households with access to smokefree living environments will help improve the health of these communities. In addition, there's no constitutional right protecting the act of smoking.

***Q. How will no-smoking restrictions for apartments be enforced?***

**A.** Landlords will be given tools and resources - including sample lease language - to effectively enforce non-smoking provisions. Non-smoking restrictions are enforced in the same manner as any other provisions in the lease. The CDC reports that operators

of multi-unit housing with existing smokefree policies indicated that they are more likely to keep the policies in place

***Q. Who is supporting these efforts?***

**A.** Project partners include AAGLA, CDTech, FAME Corporations, ChangeLab Solutions, the American Lung Association, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Los Angeles Unified School District Student Health and Human Services, USC Tobacco Center for Regulatory Sciences in Vulnerable Populations and the UCLA School of Medicine.

Other supporting organizations include the American Heart Association, the California Department of Public Health, Los Angeles City Attorney Michael N. Feuer, the California Endowment, the UCLA Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Equity and UCLA Cancer Prevention and Control.