

NCI Smokefree Meeting Policy: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why did NCI institute a Smokefree Meeting Policy?

Increasingly, health organizations recognize their role in setting standards and are holding conferences only in jurisdictions that protect the public from secondhand smoke (SHS). Convening meetings and conferences only in states, counties, cities, and towns that have enacted comprehensive smokefree ordinances allows NCI to recognize the contribution of jurisdictions that have chosen to protect the public from SHS exposure, helping to make progress toward NCI's goal of eliminating suffering and death caused by cancer.

2. When did the NCI policy go into effect?

The NCI policy was announced in July 2006 and became effective January 1, 2007. Meetings and conferences for which planning began before the effective date were exempted from the policy.

3. How do I find a smokefree location for a meeting or conference?

A list of smokefree states, counties, cities, and towns is maintained by the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation. Visit the website at <https://no-smoke.org> for the latest quarterly list.

4. Is there a threshold size of meeting or conference to which the NCI policy applies?

If a meeting or conference has 20 or more attendees, it is subject to NCI's Smokefree Meeting Policy.

5. What if NCI is not the sole or primary organizer or sponsor of a meeting or conference?

The policy applies only to meetings or conferences for which NCI is the sole or primary organizer or sponsor. However, NCI staff are asked to encourage organizers of meetings in which NCI has significant involvement to hold their meetings or conferences in smokefree jurisdictions.

6. What about NCI conference grants?

NCI supports scientific conferences, typically convened by established scientific or professional societies, through conference grants. NCI's Smokefree Meeting Policy does not apply to recipients of conference grants. However, NCI staff are asked to encourage recipients of conference grants to hold their conferences in smokefree jurisdictions.

7. What are the specific circumstances that justify an exception to this policy?

Permitted exceptions to the policy are listed below. Staff do not need to obtain permission to use one of the permitted exceptions.

- The need to convene an NCI meeting or conference in coordination with another meeting or conference that is not sponsored by NCI, which is taking place in a jurisdiction that is not yet smokefree.
- The need to convene a site visit at an NCI-supported institution (e.g., an NCI-designated Cancer Center or other grantee) located in a jurisdiction that is not yet smokefree.

- The need to convene a meeting in close proximity to a special population group (e.g., a Tribal community) located in a specific region that is not yet smokefree.
- Meetings on NCI campuses.
- The requirements of the Competition in Contracting Act (41 U.S.C. sec. 253).
- The requirements of the Federal Travel Regulations (41 U.S.C. sec. 301).

8. Will holding the meeting at a smokefree facility satisfy the policy?

No. It is not sufficient for a meeting or conference facility alone to be smokefree. The policy requires that the meeting facility be in a state, county, city, or town that has enacted a comprehensive smokefree ordinance. This is because the primary purpose of the NCI policy is to recognize the contribution of jurisdictions that have chosen to protect the public and employees from SHS exposure, thereby helping to make progress toward NCI's goal of eliminating suffering and death caused by cancer.

9. Is it acceptable to have a meeting in a jurisdiction that has passed a comprehensive smokefree law, but before the law goes into effect?

No. A jurisdiction is not considered smokefree by NCI's criteria until, and unless, its law has taken effect.

10. What is the process for determining whether a meeting is subject to NCI's Smokefree Meeting Policy?

To summarize, a meeting or conference is subject to the policy if:

1. NCI is the sole or primary organizer or sponsor of the meeting, and
2. The number of attendees is 20 or greater, and
3. It does not fall under one of the stated exceptions (see question 7).

11. Are NCI staff restricted from attending meetings organized or sponsored by other organizations that are held in jurisdictions that are not yet smokefree?

No. NCI's Smokefree Meeting Policy is focused only on the location of meetings or conferences organized or sponsored by NCI. It is not intended to affect staff's ability to travel to other meetings or conferences.

12. Have any other NIH Institutes established a Smokefree Meeting Policy?

Yes. On September 21, 2006, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) announced that it was adopting a Smokefree Meeting Policy to take effect January 1, 2007. The policy, which is similar to NCI's, is located at <https://www.drugabuse.gov/news-events/meetings-events/smoke-free-meeting-policy>. Additionally, the Fogarty International Center has implemented a Smokefree Meeting Policy. It is located at <https://www.fic.nih.gov/News/Events/Documents/Smoke-freeMtgs.pdf>.

13. How is NCI's Smokefree Meeting Policy different from the NCI Tobacco-Free Policy?

The two policies are complementary. The purpose of NCI's Smokefree Meeting Policy is to recognize the contribution of jurisdictions that have chosen to protect the public from SHS exposure, thereby helping to make progress toward NCI's goal of eliminating suffering and death caused by cancer. The purpose of NCI's Tobacco-Free Policy is to maintain a tobacco-free environment within the NCI. By implementing this policy, NCI: (a) Maintains consistency

between NCI's ongoing tobacco-related work across all areas and NCI's policies for its own workplaces and employees; (b) Helps maintain clean air in a safe and healthy environment for everyone who works for and with NCI in its workspaces; (c) Offers tobacco cessation information and opportunities to those who work for and with NCI in its workspaces; and (d) Provides an example for other Federal, private, and non-profit workplaces about how to implement and maintain a comprehensive tobacco-free policy. Information about the NCI Tobacco-Free Policy is available [here](#).

14. Does NIH have a Tobacco-Free Policy?

Yes. Effective October 1, 2008, the use of all tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, smokeless tobacco, or other tobacco products) is prohibited at all times on the NIH Bethesda Campus. As the Tobacco-Free NIH website explains, "By encouraging tobacco cessation, NIH seeks to improve the health of all staff and visitors while positioning the NIH as a model for other agencies and organizations that are planning similar programs and policies aimed at promoting healthy, tobacco-free behaviors." Information about the NIH Tobacco-Free Campus Policy is available [here](#).