When Residents Need Help with Secondhand Smoke in Apartments

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. Will a letter from my doctor help?

A. Yes, a letter from a health care provider describing how you are harmed or at risk of being harmed by the secondhand tobacco smoke may help with your request for a smoke-free policy, or your request to move or break your lease without penalty.

Q. What kind of air filter or air purifier should I buy?

A. Air cleaning systems can remove large particles, but not the smaller particles or gases found in tobacco smoke. Air filters do not protect from tobacco smoke.

(source: www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/protection/ ventilation/)

Q. Will caulking around windows, in crevices and cracks help reduce the smoke?

A. Trying to prevent tobacco smoke from coming into your home in any way is a good idea, however your efforts may not reduce your problem.

Q. If I just open my window to get some fresh air, does that help?

A. Letting in fresh air may help, but will not replace all of the polluted air in your unit; it may not reduce your problem.

Q. If I turn on a fan and circulate the air, won't that reduce the smoke that I smell?

A. Moving the air around with a fan may mask the odor of smoke, but you are still exposed to the toxins in the tobacco smoke.

Q. Is there a meter I could use to see how much smoke is coming into my apartment?

A. There are detectors that can measure the amount of secondhand tobacco smoke in the air. You can find out more about these on the internet. However, if you are hoping to use evidence from this kind of device in court to prove you are being exposed to tobacco smoke in your apartment, be aware that the detector will not show where the smoke is coming from. It will not prove that the smoke comes from your neighbor rather than from you smoking in your own unit. It would be your word against your neighbor's if they refuse to admit they are smoking in their unit.