Smoke-Free multi-unit housing complexes Policy Record Evaluation Report (1-E-3)

**Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission**

**Rural Tobacco Education Program**

Martha Zarate, Project Director

1920 Mariposa Mall, Suite #300

Fresno, CA 93721

(559) 263-1265

(559) 263-1339 (Fax)

Martha.zarate@fresnoeoc.org

**Report author:**

Tanisha D. Garcia, Local Evaluation Consultant

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# Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Complexes:

**Record Evaluation Review (1-E-3)**

#  *AIM AND OUTCOME*

The Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission, Rural Tobacco Education Program (RTEP), sought to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) and third-hand smoke (THS) in multi-unit housing (MUH) complexes. The program set the following objective to accomplish this goal:

*By June 30, 2025, two cities in rural Fresno County (e.g., Kerman and Mendota) will adopt and implement a policy that will prohibit smoking in 100% of individual units (including balconies and patios) in multi-unit housing complexes, making them entirely smoke-free units; and will require rental vacancy listings to include a category for smoking and non-smoking units.*

To date, only one city in rural Fresno County has adopted a MUH policy that prohibits smoking in 100% of individual units (including balconies and patios), making them entirely smoke-free units. No policies have been adopted requiring managers, affordable housing providers, and owners to disclose the location of smoking and non-smoking units or the smoking history of a unit to prospective tenants. Also, no policies have been adopted that require rental vacancy listing to include a category for smoking and non-smoking units.

***BACKGROUND***

Smoking is the single greatest avoidable cause of disease and death in the United States. Furthermore, SHS exposure has been shown to cause illness and premature death in children and adults who do not smoke. Exposure of adults to SHS can have immediate adverse effects and cause coronary heart disease and lung cancer. The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to SHS.1

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)2 found that one in four nonsmokers is exposed (SHS). Furthermore, one in three nonsmokers who live in rental housing are exposed to SHS. Many MUH residents are children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, there remains a significant need to address exposure to SHS in MUH complexes.

According to the California Department of Public Health, as of October 2024, 106 municipalities in California have enacted ordinance that regulate smoking in MUH. According to the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation,3 these municipal laws prohibit smoking in 100% of private units of all specified types of MUH. Survey results from the California Adult Tobacco Survey4 revealed that 77.0% of Californians agreed that apartment complexes should require half of their rental units to be smoke-free. Furthermore, 85.3% of Californians agreed that smoking should not be permitted in common outdoor areas in apartment/condominium complexes, such as pools, common area patios, and walkways.

Multi-unit housing (MUH) is a significant residential option for many individuals and families in Fresno County. In 2010-2014, an estimated 25.0% of housing units were MUH in Fresno County. Also, the median household income in Fresno County was $45,201 per year and limited homeownership's affordability for many residents.5

The Fresno County Housing Authority oversees programs for over 14,000 families through some low-income options, including conventional low-rent, section 8 existing, section new construction, section 8 moderate rehabilitation, Section 8 voucher, migrant, farm labor, and emergency housing. Housing quality standards stipulate "the dwelling must be free of pollutants in the air at levels that threaten the health of the occupants." Federal regulations cite "dangerous levels of air pollution" as carbon monoxide, sewer gas, fuel gas, dust, and other harmful pollutants.6 However, SHS and THS exposure are not explicitly addressed as an interior air quality pollutant.

In February 2019, the City of Firebaugh adopted a 100% smoke-free MUH complex policy. However, SHS in multi-unit and public housing continues to be a problem in rural Fresno County. Many families, children, and elderly residents in MUH and public housing experience an increase in respiratory problems, including asthma and emphysema. Senior housing residents encounter additional difficulties, including smoke detectors going off, being seriously ill, and exposure to tobacco smoke in their housing unit. This situation has led to many complaints from residents living in MUH in rural Fresno County communities, indicating that there is a problem of exposure to SHS in MUH.

***EVALUATION METHODS AND DESIGN***

This process evaluation activity was designed to guide the program's policy adoption efforts in rural Fresno County (e.g., Kerman and Mendota)*.*  The RTEP targeted Kerman and Mendota's cities for the adoption and implementation of a MUH complex policy. This evaluation activity was to identify policymakers' viewpoints and address previously expressed concerns about the initiative. Also, the process evaluation activity was used to identify a potential champion for the issue and the challenges or barriers to the adoption process.

The policy record review used current city council agendas and minutes posted on the Cities of Kerman and Mendota websites. The time interval for this evaluation activity was January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024.7-8  Comments and votes of the City Council members were analyzed to tailor the intervention and examine the intervention's activities. Content analysis was conducted to identify the reasons for the adoption of the policy passing or not passing.

A "Policy Review Form" was used to identify the specific information on tobacco control policies recorded in the Cities of Kerman and Mendota City Council agendas and minutes. A copy of the "Policy Review Form" instrument is available in Appendix A. The agendas and city council minutes were reviewed to collect information from each record. Data were collected on the council meeting date, council members present, agenda items related to tobacco control issues raised during the discussion of the tobacco control item (support/opposition), and other agenda items or discussions relevant to the project's work.

**Limitations**

The policy records review of city council agendas and minutes was used to identify relevant issues supporting and opposition to the objective. While this approach provides insights into the process of policy adoption, public records are not prepared for evaluative purposes. As a result, there are limitations in the completeness and timely posting of City Council minutes.

***RESULTS***

City Council agendas and minutes for January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, in the Cities of Kerman and Mendota were used for the policy record review. These records did not reveal any issues or discussions that involved support for or opposition to the smoke-free MUH complex policy in Kerman. However, the City Council of Mendota discussed a policy to cite violators who were caught drinking and smoking while utilizing community sports fields

Policy records for the City of Kerman revealed no action or discussions on tobacco-related issues that could determine policymakers' viewpoints. Mendota City Council minutes from April 2024, indicated that Mayor Pro Tem Lopez directed staff to proceed with the implementation of drafting a facilities policy with the inclusion of tournament vendor fees, to further investigate who will be cited for drinking and smoking during the use of city facilities.

***CONCLUSIONS***

The RTEP Program's goal is to pass a policy prohibiting smoking in 100% of individual units (including balconies and patios) in multi-unit housing complexes, making them entirely smoke-free units. The proposed objective will also require rental vacancy listings to include a category for smoking and non-smoking units. The City of Firebaugh implemented the policy on July 1, 2019, with notification to all MUH owners/managers, including a resident addendum agreement and sample lease agreement. Despite previous efforts, rural Fresno County communities have been reluctant to adopt tobacco-related policies that are perceived as anti-business or negatively impact local businesses. However, there remains continued interest in addressing housing availability and living conditions in these communities.

Smoke-free MUH policy adoption issues were reviewed in the Cities of Kerman and Mendota City Council agendas or minutes for January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024. Policy records for the City of Kerman did not reveal any action or discussions on tobacco-related issues that could determine policymakers' viewpoints. The Mendota City Council minutes did indicate the implementation of drafting a facilities policy with the inclusion of tournament vendor fees, to further investigate who will be cited for drinking and smoking during the use of city facilities.

Based on these findings, RTEP will continue to advocate for a smoke-free MUH policy in the targeted rural Fresno County communities. These results will be disseminated to community partners, policymakers, and the Fresno County LLA Tobacco Coalition.

***References***

1U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General.* Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of Smoking and Health, 2006.

2Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Secondhand Smoke: An Unequal Danger. *Vitalsigns*, February 2015. https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/pdf/2015-02-vitalsigns.pdf

3Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights. https://center4tobaccopolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Matrix-of-Strong-Local-Smokefree-MUH-Feb-2019.pdf

4California Adult Tobacco Survey. (2007). Prepared by: California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program, March 2008.

5U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 – 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF

6<http://www2.hafresno.org/files/Housing_Quality_Standards_2004512-112913_.pdf>

7City of Mendota, City Council Minutes, <https://www.cityofmendota.com/agendas-and-minutes-2/#1672164781588-411a9338-3f03>

8City of Kerman Council Agendas and Minutes, http://cityofkerman.net/city-council-meeting-agendas-minutes/

**Appendix A**

Policy Review Instrument

**Policy Review Form**

**City Council Meeting Records**

1. City: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Month/Year: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. City council members present: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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4. What item on the agenda related to tobacco control: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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5. Issues raised during the discussion of the tobacco control item:

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| **Issues Raised in Support****[Individuals(s) raising issue]** | **Issues Raised in Opposition****[Individuals(s) raising issue]** |
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6. Other agenda items/discussions relevant to the work of the project: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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