



On Track for a Smoke-Free Santa Ana

CG 10-100, Contract #10-10192

MUH Key Informant Interviews

Key Findings

June 2014

KEY INFORMANT SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Nine key informant interviews were conducted with owners/managers of multiunit housing (MUH) properties between September 2013 and April 2014. The majority of owners and managers were responsible for one building, and on average, managed 73 units, in Santa Ana, Irvine, Tustin, Buena Park, Orange, Anaheim, Brea, and Riverside, California.

SMOKING POLICY

Six out of nine respondents considered implementing a policy to reduce secondhand smoke liability and/or maintenance issues. One respondent mentioned that it was brought to the board about a year ago when America On Track approached her, but it was not a hot topic at that time. The other respondent mentioned that it had been discussed, but that not many people who live or work on the property smoke anyhow. Another respondent mentioned that he had considered implementing a policy, because the apartment building he manages houses a lot of families.

Pros to implementing the policy primarily included health benefits and cleaner apartments. When asked about the “cons” of a “no smoking” policy, respondents expressed concern that the tenants may be upset or angry about the policy, including arguments between the tenants and property staff who may enforce the policy, and also mentioned that some residents do indeed smoke.

SMOKING COMPLAINTS

Four out of nine of the respondents mentioned that they had experienced complaints from tenants about drifting secondhand smoke; one respondent talked to the parties directly (those who complained and those who were the source of the smoke) and one mentioned that the issue was directed to a supervisor. One respondent believed the smoke was coming from another apartment building next door.

SMOKING-RELATED MAINTENANCE

None of the respondents indicated that they had to clean up cigarette litter, and were not aware of children becoming ill due to the presence of cigarette butts. While one respondent mentioned that repainting the walls and replacing the carpet has contributed to increased maintenance costs for units that have been smoked in, the other respondents did not express any concern regarding maintenance costs.

One respondent did experience a fire in her building, but indicated that the fire was stove-related and apparently not smoking-related. Fire exposure concerned all of the respondents, and six out of nine indicated interest in learning more about insurance discounts attached to “no smoking” policies.

SMOKING POLICY EVALUATION

None of the respondents had previously surveyed their tenants about the possibility of adopting a “smoke-free” common areas policy and a “smoke free” units policy, and most were not interested in conducting such a survey. In terms of what else America On Track could do to be helpful to the managers/owners, respondents indicated interest in receiving smoke-free signs and would like for America On Track to speak to the tenants, if the apartment building does become smoke-free. Visiting other apartment sites and contacting the corporate office of the property management was also suggested.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Data Finding: The majority of owners and managers have considered implementing a smoke-free policy in their apartment buildings, but have not had instances of secondhand smoke, cigarette litter, or unmanageable resident complaints to drive them to actually implement the policy.

- *Recommendation:* Educating the owners and managers about the long-term effects of smoking may be helpful in moving the owners/managers from contemplating a policy to actually implementing one.

Data Finding: Policy enforcement and tenants becoming upset or angry over a “no smoking policy” appears to be a concern.

- *Recommendation:* Providing concrete suggestions for feasible enforcement methods may make policy changes more appealing. Conducting a survey among tenants to understand their attitudes towards a policy is suggested. If there are concerns among tenants, providing marketing and educational materials to appease tenants may ease management’s concerns.