

November 15, 2013

To: Smoke-Free America (Special Interest Group)
From: Genitha Wint, Staff Training, and Development Manager
Subject: A follow-up report on a Smoke-Free Workplace

For a number of years, my employer, The Legal Aid Society (law firm) had experienced a sharp increase in the use of employee sick leave due to respiratory illnesses. I personally, had noticed that several friends, co-workers, and longtime employees had been newly diagnosed with respiratory diseases, such as:

- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Recurrent chest and throat infections
- Bronchioloalveolar Carcinoma Lung Cancer (BAC).

These illnesses attacked friends and co-workers that were not tobacco smokers themselves, but had been exposed to many years of secondhand smoke in the workplace.

Secondhand smoke can have a number of serious health effects on non-smokers, particularly in the workplace because, aside from time spent at home, studies have shown that most adults spent the majority of their waking hours at their place of employment. It is a known fact that exposure to secondhand cigarette smoke contributes to nearly 3,000 deaths in adult nonsmokers per year.

Therefore, in the spring of 2001, The Legal Aid Society implemented new guidelines to protect the rights of employees who wish to smoke and to protect the health of those employees who do not wish to smoke nor be exposed to the adverse effects of secondhand smoking by others. These guidelines were as follows:

- Employees will no longer be allowed to smoke in their private offices, at their desks or in any common areas of the office.
- The conference room on each floor will be the ONLY designed smoking area in the building.
- If any employee wishes to smoke indoors, they must do so in the conference room with the door closed and at least one window open.
- If the employee wishes to smoke outdoors they may do so however, they must stand at least 20 feet from the entrance/exit of the building and all cigarette waste products must be disposed of properly.

On March 30, 2003, to be in compliance with New York City Smoke-Free Air Act (Title 17, Chapter 5 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York) and New York State Clean Indoor Air Act (Article 13-E of the New York State Public Health Law), the Legal Aid Society adopted the guidelines of New York State Local Law 47 of 2002 which amended the Smoke-Free Air Act. In As a result, the Legal Aid Society disseminated written workplace smoking policy to all employees which states the following:

- All indoor areas of this Law Firm including private offices, conference rooms and employee lounges will now be smoke-free.
- Smoking is prohibited in all company issued vehicles when there is more than one person present.
- Compliance with the smoke-free workplace policy is not optional but is mandatory for all employees as well as all visitors to this Law Firm;
- Said policy noted that any employee who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action and any visitor who chooses not to comply will be asked to leave the premises immediately.
- The company went on to post “**NO SMOKING**” signs at all entrances, on all bulletin boards, in all bathrooms, in all stairwells and in all other prominent places of the building.

Since the implementation of the New York State Smoke-Free Air Act (Title 17, Chapter 5 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York) and New York State Clean Indoor Air Act (Article 13-E of the New York State Public Health Law), I have noticed a dramatic decrease in the amount of sick-leave time taken by many of my fellow co-workers that are associated with respiratory illnesses. Needless to say, a great percentage of them have quit smoking altogether, and there have not been any newly diagnosed cases of lung cancer. So I'm happy to report, that smoking in the workplace is a thing of the past.