

Contact: Brenda C. Westfall
Ithaca Housing Authority
800 S. Plain Street, Ithaca, NY 14850
Phone 607-273-8629 x243
Fax 607-273-1151

Ithaca Housing Authority

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ithaca Housing Authority Goes Fully Smoke-Free on May 1

New policy covers all 341 units, aims to improve living conditions for hundreds of tenants

(ITHACA, N.Y.) — Taking a major step for the health, safety, and comfort of tenants and staff, all Ithaca Housing Authority (IHA) properties will become smoke free as of May 1, 2018. The new IHA policy prohibits smoking or vaping by tenants, guests, or staff in any apartment, common area, or IHA outdoor areas (unless otherwise designated). Tenant and staff meetings, a public comment period, and signing lease addendums have been taking place since the policy was passed by the IHA Board of Commissioners last fall. The policy includes Northside, Southview, and Overlook Terrace family sites as well as Titus Towers I and II.

"Secondhand tobacco smoke is a real issue for tenants and landlords alike," said IHA Executive Director Brenda Westfall. "It is impossible to contain the smoke from even one tenant, so it drifts into hallways and neighboring apartments. Even what some may consider 'minor' exposure is enough to be a serious health risk for tenants with respiratory ailments, for children, and for pets," she explained.

Additionally, Westfall cited secondhand smoke as a workplace hazard for maintenance staff and building managers, a serious fire risk, and a big cost factor when turning over apartments between tenants.

"Use of electronic cigarettes and other vaping devices is included in the policy simply because the health risks of exposure to the secondhand vapors are still unknown," Westfall added. "We are emphasizing tenant and staff health with this policy, so we're following the County's lead." Tompkins County law has prohibited vaping indoors at all workplaces since 2014, and more recently New York State has done the same.

Smoke-free policies for rentals and multi-unit housing are fast becoming commonplace locally, statewide, and nationally. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) finalized a rule in December 2016 that requires all federally funded public housing to be fully smoke free by July 30, 2018. Well over 50 housing authorities in New York State already have smoke-free policies that cover all apartments, including Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo.

A kick-off event celebrating good health and fresh air will be held at Titus Towers on May 1 from 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm and at family site properties later this spring.