



Public Health
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Benton County, Iowa

Benton County Board of Health Position Statement on Tobacco and Nicotine Free Parks

The Benton County Board of Health has reviewed and discussed the relevant facts and concerns on the issue of tobacco and nicotine use in public parks. Subsequent to that review and discussion, the Benton County Board of Health has unanimously adopted the position which supports tobacco and nicotine free parks, with the exception of FDA approved nicotine medication and products used for cessation. The rationale for supporting tobacco and nicotine free parks may be summarized in the following areas:

1. **Health Effects:** There is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke; even brief exposure can be harmful to health. Secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, heart disease and stroke, and is especially harmful to young children. Research has shown that outdoor levels of tobacco smoke can be as high as indoor levels of secondhand smoke.
2. **Role Modeling:** Tobacco-free environments prevent kids from using tobacco and assists adults in quitting. Youth and children exposed to tobacco and nicotine use are more likely to use tobacco and nicotine products when they get older. Research shows prohibiting tobacco use in public places decreases the chances that kids will use tobacco products and supports adults in using tobacco less or stopping altogether.
3. **Smoking Prevalence:** The majority of Benton County residents do not smoke or use nicotine products. In Iowa, less than one in five residents smoke. Environmental support measures such as a tobacco and nicotine free parks encourage residents of Benton County to live tobacco and nicotine free.
4. **Environmental Impact:** Cigarette butts are not biodegradable and can take up to 15 years to decompose. During that time, they leach cadmium, arsenic, and other poisons into the soil. Cigarette butts may also be ingested by toddlers, pets, and wildlife.

The Benton County Board of Health supports initiatives to eliminate tobacco and nicotine use in public places, including parks, which are intended for the healthy enjoyment of all citizens, including children and youth.

Benton County Board of Health

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References

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