South Dakota Department of Health

Tobacco-Free Park or Recreation Policy Evaluation Guide

The attached guide and rubric serve as an internal scoring tool for state and local parks to evaluate their existing tobacco-free policies in their respective districts. The resource closely mirrors tools referenced by South Dakota State University's 2015 policy evaluation guide[1] and follows close consideration provided by the Centers for Disease Control[2]. The overall policy score was determined by taking the sum of all sections and dividing by 5, with 5 being the maximum score given to a policy.

To access the South Dakota Department of Health's recommended tobacco-free policies, please visit https://quittobaccosd.com/resources/advocacy-tools/policy-support-materials.

For more information or permission to use this attached guide, please contact Hilary Larsen (Hilary.Larsen@state.sd.us).

[1] https://goodandhealthysd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/HealthcareModelTFPolicyAssessmentTool.pdf
[2] https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/tobacco-control/pdfs/evaluation_toolkit.pdf

Tobacco-Free Park or Recreation Policy Evaluation Guide

Park or Recreation Area Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Scorer:**_____ **OVERALL:** _____ /20

Section A. Product Coverage		
A1. E-cigarette/vapes? **YES** or **NO**	A2. Synthetic nicotine? **YES** or **NO**	A3. Smokeless tobacco? **YES** or **NO**
A4. Traditional tobacco exceptions? **YES** or **NO**	A5. Cessation product exceptions? **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: ____ / 5

Section B. Facilities		
B1. All park grounds? **YES** or **NO**	B2. All individuals? **YES** or **NO**	B3. Parking lots and personal vehicles? **YES** or **NO**
B4. Park-sponsored events, both on- and off- site? **YES** or **NO**	B5. Signage clearly listed? **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: ____ / 5

Section C. Consequences		
C1. Enforcement procedures defined? **YES** or **NO**	C2. Tiered consequences defined? **YES** or **NO**	C3. Responsible officer defined? **YES** or **NO**
C4. Referral to SD Quitline, or another appropriate cessation tool? **YES** or **NO**	C5. Cultural exemptions (traditional tobacco?) **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: ____ / 5

Section D. Communication/Implementation		
D1. General communication of policy? **YES** or **NO**	D2. Signage about policy? **YES** or **NO**	D3. Policy training available to staff and public? **YES** or **NO**
D4. Responsible agency/staff identified? **YES** or **NO**	D5. Revised within past five (5) years? **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: _____ / 5

Section E. Other Considerations – NO POINTS ASSIGNED		
E1. Are staff trained in policy enforcement and public education? **YES** or **NO**	E2. Are tobacco waste reduction efforts included? **YES** or **NO**	E3. Does the policy link to local health promotion (eg. Secondhand smoke awareness?) **YES** or **NO**

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

SECTION SCORING SPECIFICS & EXPLANATIONS

Section A: Product Coverage

Section A. Product Coverage		
A1. E-cigarette/vapes? **YES** or **NO**	A2. Synthetic nicotine? **YES** or **NO**	A3. Smokeless tobacco? **YES** or **NO**
A4. Traditional tobacco exceptions? **YES** or **NO**	A5. Cessation product exceptions? **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: _____ / 5

Rationale:

This section assesses the comprehensiveness of the policy in addressing various tobacco and nicotine products. Effective tobacco-free park policies should clearly define the scope of regulated substances to prevent ambiguity and ensure uniform enforcement. Strong policies regulate a wide range of commercial tobacco and nicotine products, including newer synthetic or alternative forms, while allowing exceptions for FDA-approved cessation products. Culturally sensitive exceptions for traditional tobacco use may also be considered if clearly defined.

Instructions:

For each product category, indicate **YES** if the policy explicitly includes it and **NO** if it does not.

- **A1. E-cigarette/vapes:** Does the policy regulate e-cigarettes and vaping devices?
- **A2. Synthetic nicotine:** Does the policy cover synthetic/analog nicotine used in products like pouches or lozenges?
- **A3. Smokeless tobacco:** Does the policy include products like chewing tobacco, snus, and dissolvable tobacco?
- **A4. Traditional tobacco exceptions:** Does the policy make exceptions for specific traditional tobacco products (e.g., ceremonial or cultural use)?
- **A5. Cessation product exceptions:** Does the policy exclude FDA-approved cessation products (e.g., nicotine patches, gum, lozenges) from restrictions?

Each "YES" answer earns **1 point**, with a total possible score of **5 points**.

Section B: Facilities

Section B. Facilities		
B1. All park grounds? **YES** or **NO**	B2. All individuals? **YES** or **NO**	B3. Parking lots and personal vehicles? **YES** or **NO**
B4. Park-sponsored events, both on- and off- site? **YES** or **NO**	B5. Signage clearly listed? **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: _____ / 5

Rationale:

This section evaluates the physical and social scope of the tobacco-free policy within the park system. A comprehensive policy should apply to all areas under park jurisdiction, including outdoor and indoor spaces, as well as special events. It should cover everyone using the park—staff, visitors, and contractors—and address high-risk areas like parking lots and personal vehicles. Clear and visible signage is essential to promote awareness and ensure compliance with the policy.

Instructions:

Review the policy and determine whether it includes each of the following elements. Mark **"YES"** if the policy explicitly includes the measure and **"NO"** if it does not.

B1. All park grounds: Does the policy apply to all park-owned or managed areas including trails, picnic areas, and restrooms?
- **B2. All individuals:** Does the policy apply to all persons including staff, volunteers, vendors, and the general public?
- **B3. Parking lots and personal vehicles:** Does the policy prohibit tobacco use inside personal vehicles while on park property?
- **B4. Park-sponsored events:** Does the policy apply to events sponsored by the park district, even if held off-site?
- **B5. Signage clearly listed:** Does the policy state that tobacco-free signs will be placed visibly throughout the park system?

Each "YES" response earns **1 point**, for a maximum of **5 points** in this section.

Section C: Consequences

Section C. Consequences		
C1. Enforcement procedures defined? **YES** or **NO**	C1. Enforcement procedures defined? **YES** or **NO**	C1. Enforcement procedures defined? **YES** or **NO**
C4. Referral to SD Quitline, or another appropriate cessation tool? **YES** or **NO**	C5. Cultural exemptions (traditional tobacco?) **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: _____ / 5

Rationale:

This section examines how the policy is enforced and whether it supports education and culturally respectful practices. A strong policy outlines enforcement methods, identifies who is responsible for implementation, and includes tiered consequences. It also supports individuals seeking to quit by referring them to cessation resources. Importantly, it should honor cultural practices, such as traditional or ceremonial tobacco use, in accordance with laws like the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

Instructions:

Review the policy and determine whether it includes each of the following elements. Mark **"YES"** if the policy explicitly includes the measure and **"NO"** if it does not.

- **C1. Enforcement procedures defined:** Does the policy clearly state how violations are handled?
- **C2. Tiered consequences defined:** Does the policy include progressive or educational responses to violations rather than immediate fines or bans?
- **C3. Responsible officer defined:** Does the policy name a person or office responsible for enforcement and follow-up?
- **C4. Referral to cessation tools:** Does the policy mention referral to services such as the SD Quitline or other quit support programs?
- **C5. Cultural exemptions:** Does the policy allow exceptions for traditional or ceremonial tobacco use consistent with applicable cultural or religious protections?

Each "YES" response earns **1 point**, for a maximum of **5 points** in this section.

Section D: Communication/Implementation

Section D. Communication/Implementation		
D1. General communication of policy? **YES** or **NO**	D2. Signage about policy? **YES** or **NO**	D3. Available in student handbook? **YES** or **NO**
D4. Designates individual/office responsible for policy? **YES** or **NO**	D5. Revised within past five (5) years? **YES** or **NO**	
		SECTION: _____ / 5

Rationale:

For a tobacco-free park policy to be effective, it must be clearly communicated and routinely updated. This section assesses whether the policy is visible to the public and staff, whether training or guidance is provided, and whether the policy is reviewed regularly. Having an agency or staff member responsible ensures accountability and continuity.

Instructions:

Review the policy and determine whether it includes each of the following elements. Mark **"YES"** if the policy explicitly includes the measure and **"NO"** if it does not.

- **D1. General communication of policy:** Is the policy shared publicly via the park website, brochures, press releases, or events?
- **D2. Signage about policy:** Are signs posted throughout the park to notify users about the tobacco-free status.
- **D3. Policy training available:** Are there resources or trainings to help staff and volunteers understand and enforce the policy?
- **D4. Responsible agency/staff identified:** Does the policy designate an entity or individual responsible for management and questions?
- **D5. Revised within past five years:** Has the policy been updated recently to reflect current best practices and products (e.g., vaping)?

Each "YES" response earns **1 point**, for a maximum of **5 points** in this section.

Section E: Other Considerations – NO POINTS ASSIGNED

Section E. Other Considerations – NO POINTS ASSIGNED		
E1. Are staff trained in policy enforcement and public education? **YES** or **NO**	E2. Are tobacco waste reduction efforts included? **YES** or **NO**	E3. Does the policy link to local health promotion (eg. Secondhand smoke awareness?) **YES** or **NO**

Rationale:

This section captures additional best practices that enhance the impact of a tobacco-free park policy. Staff training improves enforcement and community engagement. Addressing tobacco waste, such as cigarette butt litter, promotes environmental health. Connecting the policy to broader public health initiatives can increase community awareness and support.

Instructions:

Mark YES or NO for each item based on whether it is mentioned in the policy. This section does not receive points but may inform policy enhancement discussions.