

Protection from Secondhand Smoke and Vapour

Reviewed Date		Number	HS0110
Revised Date	July 24, 2025	Approved Date	May 24, 2006

Introduction

Secondhand smoke (SHS) is a significant health hazard and causes premature death and disease in people who do not smoke but are exposed to it. It is well established that there is no safe level of SHS exposure. The full health effects, short-term and long-term, related to exposure to the vapour from e-cigarettes and vapour/smoke from similar products remains unknown and thus it is prudent to avoid exposure. Secondhand vapour from e-cigarettes contains a mixture of small particles and chemicals that are not safe for the lungs to inhale.

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit endeavors to provide, maintain and promote working environments that safeguard the health and welfare of its employees, students, and volunteers. These environments are designed to be free from the harmful effects of tobacco, tobacco-like products, and cannabis including, but not limited to, e-cigarettes and other smoking devices. In addition, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA) provides protection from secondhand smoke and vapour exposure for home health care workers. It is recognized that smoke and vapour-free environments protect health, and promote healthy role modeling to youth, and positively support quit smoking efforts.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Board of Health members, employees, students, volunteers and client's protection from exposure to SHS and e-cigarette vapour while on SMDHU property. The purpose is also to reinforce smoking and vaping is not permitted on all SMDHU property.

Legislative Authority

Ontario Health and Safety Act (1990)

Smoke-Free Ontario Act (2017)

Policy Definitions and Interpretation

Employee: includes all full-time, part-time, contract, temporary, or casual staff

Supervisor: the person to whom the employee directly reports or in the absence of the direct supervisor, another management representative of the SMDHU.

Secondhand smoke (SHS): the smoke produced by burning tobacco, cannabis, and/or other smoked products or exhaled by a person using the product that is inhaled involuntarily by a non-user. SHS also includes toxins that persist in the environment long after smoking has ended and is often referred to as third hand smoke.

Secondhand vapour: the exhaled vapour, fog, mist, steam, or noxious gas, diffused through or suspended in the air produced by the heating of a liquid, which may or may not contain nicotine and or cannabis such as by an electronic cigarette, vaporizer or similar device. The vapour is inhaled involuntarily or passively by someone who is not using the device.

Nicotine and Commercial Tobacco Products: any product containing, made from, or derived from tobacco that are intended for human consumption, regardless of the method of use (e.g.: chewed, smoked, absorbed, dissolved, inhaled, or ingested). This includes but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, beedis, shisha, chew, snuff, and snus. It also encompasses all forms of nicotine products including electronic cigarettes, mods, nicotine cartridges and any related products. This does not include nicotine replacement therapy.

Cannabis Products: any product containing, made from, or derived from cannabis plants that are intended for human consumption, regardless of the method of use (smoked, absorbed, inhaled, or ingested). This can include drinks, ointments, rolled cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, liquid cartridges, edibles, and any related products.

Policy

SMDHU abides by the Smoke-free Ontario Act (SFOA) 2017 which requires a smoke and vapour free environment in enclosed workplaces.

SMDHU also provides secondhand smoke-free and e-cigarette vapour-free office environments for all Board members, employees, clients, volunteers, students and visitors.

SMDHU Board members, employees/students/volunteers will not expose anyone else to SHS or e-cigarette vapour while delivering service or otherwise performing their duties for SMDHU.

When delivering services in the community, all SMDHU employees/students/volunteers have the right to and will ask a person including family members, caregivers or any other person in the home/location at the time of the visit/service delivery, to refrain from smoking or vaping while in their presence when they are providing health unit services, regardless of where those services are being provided (i.e. client's home or public place).

When a person refuses to comply with the request not to smoke or vape while in their presence, employees have the right to leave a location due to the potential unsafe working condition related to exposure from SHS and e-cigarette vapour without providing further services, unless doing so would present an immediate, serious danger to the health of any person.

Managers/Supervisors will provide orientation to this policy for new employees and will ensure team members understand they are supported in taking actions as outlined in the parameters of this policy and procedure.

Procedures

Employees/Volunteers/Students providing client services in homes or other indoor or outdoor locations:

When a prearranged appointment is made for service delivery:

1. During the initial contact with the client, the employee/student/volunteer will determine if the client or any other visitor or member of the household who may be present during the service delivery smokes or vapes. If there may be a person who uses these products present in the home, the client/and or that person will be requested to refrain from smoking or vaping immediately prior to and during service delivery as per the SMDHU policy HS0110 Protection from SHS and E-cigarette Vapour. The use of these products in the service delivery setting will be documented as a safety risk in the client's chart.
2. If, during the initial phone contact, the client states they are unable to comply with this request, alternatives will be explored such as rescheduling, seeking alternative sites and/or alternative community services.
3. If clients are not compliant with the policy during or before the visit:
 - a) The employee/student/volunteer will leave the premises unless doing so presents an immediate serious danger to the health of any person.
 - b) Services to the client may be re-scheduled.
 - c) The employee will explore alternatives (including but not limited to alternative schedules, sites and other community services).
4. If the SMDHU employee/student/volunteer makes the decision to leave without providing services to the client, the employee/student/volunteer will implement the following procedure:
 - a) Notify their Supervisor/Manager within 30 minutes, or as soon as reasonably possible of the following and document actions taken:
 - b) That the worker has left.
 - c) Whether an appropriate person is present and available to care for the person to whom the SMDHU services were being provided or were to be provided, if applicable.
 - d) If the person to whom the SMDHU services were being provided or were to be provided would require SMDHU services in the next 24 hours.
 - e) In what situation the person was to whom the SMDHU services were being provided or were to be provided when the worker left, if applicable.
 - f) Whether there are any unusual circumstances and if so, what they are.
 - g) In cases involving service coordination, the employee/student/volunteer will notify appropriate agencies (where required/applicable) as soon as possible that the SMDHU service was not performed.
 - h) In cases of ongoing service disruptions, the employee/student/volunteer will work with the client to find viable solutions (change of location, etc.) to ensure that client needs are met.
5. In extenuating circumstances, should the SMDHU employee/student/volunteer make the decision to stay and provide services to the client and is exposed to SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour, the employee/student/volunteer must complete form HS0105F1 Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition and submit to their immediate supervisor.

6. If any SMDHU employee/student/volunteer is exposed to SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour during their work duties, they must complete form HS0105F1 Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition and submit to their immediate supervisor.

When a prearranged appointment cannot be made in advance of service delivery

7. Staff who may be required to enter locations where exposure to SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour may occur will:
 - a) Request that person refrain from smoking and/or vaping while SMDHU staff are present at a location for service delivery,
 - b) Complete service delivery at an alternative location without SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour exposure rather than remain in the exposed environment, if possible.
 - c) As appropriate, educate the client about the effects of exposure to SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour and assist in implementing strategies to make the location smoke-free/vapour-free.
 - d) Leave the exposed area without providing further service if the request not to actively smoke or vape is refused. In the event of a withdrawal of service, the employee/ student/volunteer shall notify their immediate supervisor to advise that they have left location.
 - e) Complete form HS0105F1 Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition and submit to their immediate supervisor.
 - f) If the SMDHU employee/student/volunteer makes the decision to stay and provide services to the client, the employee/student/volunteer must, if they are exposed to SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour, complete form HS0501F1.

Supervisors/Managers

- Ensure that employees/volunteers/students are aware of this policy and adhere to it when providing delivery service or performing duties for SMDHU on and offsite.
- Provide annual reinforcement of this policy through team meetings for all employees currently and potentially exposed to SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour during their work duties.
- If HS0105F1 Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition form is received, meet with the staff person to determine if the policy procedures were followed.

All SMDHU Employees

- If visitors are observed using tobacco products or vaping by any employee, that employee shall inform the visitor of the Smoke-Free Ontario 2017 regulations regarding smoking and vaping at workplaces and request the visitor refrain from use while on SMDHU property.
- Signs shall be kept posted at all entrances, stating that smoking and vaping is not permitted on the property.

Human Resources

- Track all incidences of staff exposure to SHS and/or e-cigarette vapour by submissions of HS0105F1 Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition forms to identify trends.

Related Policies

HS0101 Health and Safety Policy

HS0105 Injury on Duty

OP0103 Smoke and Vapour-Free Offices Policy

HR0506 Access to Tobacco Product Cessation Supports

Related Forms

HS0105F1 Potential or Existing Unsafe Workplace Condition

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

July 24, 2025 - Revised

May 14, 2025 – Policy Revised

January 24, 2018 – Policy Revised

January 2013 – Policy Revised

September 2010 Policy re-numbered, previous number B2.140