



The Providence Housing Authority's Smoke-Free Policy Documentary

To provide healthier and safer living conditions and reduce preventable health hazards associated with smoking, secondhand smoke exposure, and residential fires, the Providence Housing Authority (PHA) implemented a Smoke-Free Policy in April 2011. At the time, the PHA was a pioneer of the national Smoke-Free public housing movement and received numerous calls from housing authorities (HAs) requesting information regarding the policy's implementation. This prompted the PHA to document its Smoke-Free Policy experiences with a professionally produced documentary. This documentary served to gain stakeholder support and served as a consultation tool for HA's interested in all aspects of a smoking ban.

Problem:

When the PHA embarked on its Smoke-Free Policy as part as a city-wide collaborative effort, smoking bans in public housing authorities were considered to be innovative. Even though HUD strongly encouraged public housing authorities to prohibit smoking in their units in order to reduce preventable illnesses connected with tobacco use and to reduce smoking-related fires, the public and HA's still had its concerns with prohibiting smoking in their units. Housing authorities were hesitant to consider smoking bans because they were wary of resident upheaval, law suits, and the practicality of enforcement issues associated with smoking bans. As the notion of Smoke-Free public and private housing picked up speed as useful information and research data became available, the number of housing authorities interested in these policies began to rise. The PHA received numerous inquiries about the Smoke-Free Policy processes and activities due to: (1) their success with the elderly/disabled high-rise phase implementation of the policy, (2) the extensive written records that they created along the way, (3) the substantial press exposure that they received, (4) and wide spread Tobacco Free Campaign partnerships. To name a few, inquiries were fielded from Minnesota, Utah, Connecticut, New Jersey, as well as numerous local public housing authorities.

Creative Solution:

At the time that the interest from private and public housing agencies increased, the PHA was working on creating in-house video interviews with the organization's department heads to include on the PHA main website. The Executive Director and Project Manager of the Smoke-Free Policy thought that it would be innovative to document the experiences of the Smoke-Free Policy activities and details in order to use as a marketing tool for stakeholders as well as a consultative tool for outside agencies. In November of 2011, the PHA hired Harken Productions, Inc. This professional production company was excited to produce a streamlined product that could effectively portray all aspects of the PHA's story: technical aspects of policy like legal issues and documents, resident support, Board of Commissioner support, Smoking Cessation services/reactions, staff reaction, marketing materials, meeting topics, and a clear message. They noted that the elements of the policy were numerous and at times simultaneous but reacted to the challenge with enthusiasm and dedication to the true significance of the smoking ban. The documentary would create an opportunity to

reach beyond the PHA communities to positively impact others.

Documentary Objectives:

The Smoke-Free documentary production began in November 2011 and was completed in February 2012. The main objective of the documentary was to expose the PHA's Smoke-Free technical details and community reactions to an unlimited number of housing agencies by passing it out physically or making it available on PHA and partner websites. The second objective was to create a version that could be used to market smoke-free public housing to PHA stakeholders (residents and other organizations). The PHA felt that this was also necessary since they are consistently asked to conduct presentations about Smoke-Free housing and intended to expand the policy to their family developments and Section 8 units in the future.

Documentary Served:

The documentary served as a vehicle to disperse valuable information to the public about the dangers associated with smoking and second hands smoke as well as the PHA's approach in policy implementation to address this public health and safety concern. Real life interviews and informational visuals was created aimed to target viewers such as inquiring housing agencies, future and current public housing residents, supporting organizations, and potential partners. It allowed the PHA to share information and reach beyond our own communities to positively impact others.



Smoke-Free Policy Documentary filming photos