

Organizing coffee meetings

A coffee meeting is a casual social gathering for coffee and conversation. It is easy to organize since you are simply having coffee with a neighbour.

WHY? Talking informally about a topic over coffee or other refreshments is a natural and relaxing way for people to share information, give their opinions and make decisions. Coffee meetings are an inclusive and non-confrontational way of engaging residents and other stakeholders.

WHO? Develop a list of residents who would volunteer to host a coffee meeting. Consider board members, committees and residents who have talked with you about smoking issues. Send out an email or letter, or put up posters asking for volunteers.

WHAT? Invite the people interested in being host volunteers to an organizing coffee meeting in a common area, personal unit or outside the building (e.g., on a patio or in a gazebo). Explain the smoke-free initiative and provide written information about it to everyone. Ask them to host a coffee meeting (social time) in their unit with two to 10 neighbours.

When you have the interested volunteers, divide the residents in the building so they do not overlap. The concept behind a coffee meeting is that the volunteers invite people they know or feel comfortable with. Therefore, you may need to ask each volunteer to share whom they will invite and not randomly assign by floors or wings. However, the latter approach could work if all volunteers agree.

HOW? Each volunteer invites two to 10 people to a coffee meeting in their unit, or a party room or common area. Each volunteer provides coffee, tea, water and a small snack such as a cake, cookies, cheese and crackers, raw vegetables or fruit. The food items should be small and inexpensive. If you have funds as a condo board, or as an owner, you may wish to pay for the refreshments.

At the coffee meeting:

1. The volunteer host offers everyone refreshments.
2. The volunteer host introduces themselves and asks attendees to introduce themselves. Most will likely know each other. It is fun to have each person answer a question like, "What fun thing did you do in the last week?"
3. The volunteer host explains that they are interested in a smoke-free initiative in the building and wish to provide information and get attendees' comments.

4. Discuss smoke-free bylaws and practices using the written information provided at the organizing coffee meeting.
5. Encourage conversation about the idea. Be relaxed and let people talk in a friendly setting. Make notes if you wish.
6. Thank everyone for attending.
7. Each volunteer host gives the comments to the organizers of the smoke-free initiative.