

**SMOKE  
FREE**

**MULTI-UNIT  
HOUSING**  
NORTH-CAROLINA

## Project Fresh Life: Employing Community Health Advisors to Reduce Smoking in Public Housing

**Summary:** Durham Housing Authority (DHA) properties, in compliance with a mandate from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, introduced a smoke-free policy in summer 2018. Durham County Public Health partnered with Duke Cancer Center and DHA to design and test a program to help residents quit smoking, using a Community Engaged Research model.

**Challenge:** To help DHA residents comply with the smoke-free housing policy.

**Solution:** This project sought to recruit, train and employ a minimum of five DHA residents to work as Community Health Advisors (CHAs) who would use their expertise and social capital to help their fellow DHA residents reduce or quit smoking.

**Results:** Six CHAs were hired representing five DHA communities. They received the American Lung Association Cessation Navigator training, motivational interview training, Research 101 Ethics Training, and five completed the Racial Equity Institute Phase I workshop. CHAs tailor their services to meet community needs. Some provide support groups, some do one-on-one, in-home support, and some conduct “office hours” when residents can come by and receive education, nicotine replacement therapy and other cessation support. In addition, CHAs designed a tobacco education bingo and have conducted six bingo events in three communities. CHAs also branded the program “Fresh Life” and helped design a logo.

### Lessons Learned:

- Do your homework. Attended resident council meetings for more than two years before proposing project; met with DHA leadership to get buy-in.
- Meet at the same time and the same place to support CHA retention.
- Meet in a child-friendly space with toys and games available (purchasing these items was included in our budget).



*“The reason I am committed to helping people quit smoking is because I know firsthand how addiction works and how hard it is to go out and get help. Living here [myself], people are more comfortable talking with me because I am part of the community. This program provides free patches and gum and someone to talk to when you need, which can be difficult to get if you are on a fixed income. By working with the Fresh Life team, I can help communicate the needs of others.”*

Beverly Fearington,  
Community Health Advisor  
JJ Henderson Towers

- Offer hearty meals at all meetings and events.
- Have combination nicotine therapy (NRT) available and train CHAs to help the residents on how to use it while distributing it to them. Combination NRT works best with patches for easing long-term withdrawal and gum for short-term urges.
- Go low-tech. Avoid relying on email or any computer-based communication; use texting and phone calls. Always have a back-up number for CHAs.
- Use visuals rather than written materials whenever possible; make all written materials easy to read.
- Know what's happening in housing communities and be sensitive to that.



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