



AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

# Tobacco 21

## POLICY BREAKDOWN

“If a man has never smoked by age 18 the odds are three-to-one he never will. By age 24, the odds are twenty-to-one.”

— RJ Reynolds researcher, 1982

### CityHealth helps cities thrive through policies that improve people’s day-to-day quality of life, well-being and health.

CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, works to advance a package of evidence-based policy solutions that will help millions of people live longer, better lives in vibrant, prosperous communities.

Our assessment of how the nation’s 40 largest cities fare in nine policies is based

in research, backed by qualified experts and shown to have bipartisan support. With these policies in place, cities will attract families who want the best for themselves and their children, young people looking for interesting places to work and businesses that need high-quality talent. The bottom line: Policies like Tobacco 21 will improve lives and help cities thrive.

#### FOCUS ON POLICY: TOBACCO 21

Preventing tobacco use has already had a dramatic effect on our country, yet tobacco use remains the single most preventable cause of death and disease. Policies that raise the minimum legal age for the sale of tobacco products to 21 can reduce the number of young people—even those younger than 21—using these products, which greatly reduces their risk for addiction, disease, and premature death. More than 300 municipalities have passed laws raising the minimum age of purchase for tobacco products to 21. These are just some of the benefits of a comprehensive Tobacco 21 policy:

- **Saves lives.** Tobacco use remains the single most preventable cause of death and disease in this country, resulting in almost 500,000 deaths each year. People who begin using tobacco before age 21 are at greater risk of lifetime use. The Institute of Medicine (now the National Academy of Medicine) predicted that Tobacco 21 policies would save 4.2 million years of life for today’s youth.

- **Delays in tobacco use.** Approximately 95% of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21. Because adolescents’ and young adults’ brains are still developing, they are more susceptible to addiction. Delaying the age when young people first experiment with or begin using tobacco can reduce the risk that they will become addicted smokers. The National Academy of Medicine found that Tobacco 21 policies can result in a 25% decline in smoking initiation by 15 to 17-year olds, a 12% drop in overall smoking prevalence, and that 16,000 preterm birth and low birth weight cases would be averted within five years.

- **Economic benefits to cities.** Other research models estimate that increasing the legal smoking age from 18 to 21 years of age could lead to \$212 billion in savings over 50 years, driven largely by reduced medical costs.



## MEDALS BY CITY

Albuquerque	🚫
Atlanta	🚫
Austin	🏆
Baltimore	🏆
Boston	🏆
Charlotte	🚫
Chicago	🏆
Columbus	🏆
Dallas	🏆
Denver	🏆
Detroit	🚫
El Paso	🏆
Fresno	🏆
Ft. Worth	🏆
Houston	🏆
Indianapolis	🚫
Jacksonville	🚫
Kansas City	🏆
Las Vegas	🚫
Long Beach	🏆
Los Angeles	🏆
Louisville	🚫
Memphis	🚫
Mesa	🚫
Milwaukee	🚫
Nashville	🚫
New York	🏆
Oklahoma City	🚫
Philadelphia	🚫
Phoenix	🚫
Portland	🏆
Sacramento	🏆
San Antonio	🏆
San Diego	🏆
San Francisco	🏆
San Jose	🏆
Seattle	🏆
Tucson	🏆
Virginia Beach	🏆
Washington, D.C.	🏆

## HOW CITIES STACK UP

### The State of Tobacco 21 Policies in Big US Cities

Tobacco 21 policies raise the minimum legal sale age of tobacco products to age 21. These policies lead to fewer young people using tobacco products both immediately

and over the course of their lives. In 2019, 25 out of 40 cities received a gold medal for their Tobacco 21 policies.



### The Gold Standard for Tobacco 21

CityHealth's 40-city assessment combined innovative legal analysis with the input of national experts to determine the "gold standard" for each policy. For Tobacco 21 policies, we only awarded gold medals to

cities with the best quality policy. Cities that did not meet this standard received no medal. Our assessment of Tobacco 21 policies includes information about city laws valid through August 1, 2019.

### How did we award Tobacco 21 policy medals?

Requirement	Status
Must be at least 21 to purchase tobacco products in the city	🏆
The age restriction explicitly applies to all tobacco products, including e-cigarette and vapor products	🏆