



## **Air Quality Monitoring for Advocacy:** **How to Get Started**

Air quality monitoring (AQM) studies are useful advocacy tools for monitoring pollution from secondhand smoke. It is crucial to think through why air quality is important and what strategies are most effective with respect to the status of your local smoke-free law to determine whether you should proceed with air quality monitoring. This document provides an overview of the overall AQM process. If you decide to go ahead with AQM, you can request to work with an AQM point of contact, who can help you through the overall process from data collection to analysis of the results to dissemination of the findings.

### **Why monitor air quality?**

AQM surveys are used to measure secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure in public places to support the need for strong smoke-free policies and to stimulate high compliance rates with the law. AQM can be used as a simple, useful advocacy tool to stimulate policymakers and other decision-makers to act and increase citizen awareness on the harms of SHS exposure.

You will be using a *SidePak Aerosol Monitor* to measure levels of PM<sub>2.5</sub> (pollution found in tobacco smoke) in the air. The *SidePak* monitor will be able to detect pollution from smoke even if one person is smoking in an indoor space, which will be very different from a 100% smoke-free place.

### **Steps to take to effectively monitor air quality and advocate for smoke-free laws:**

#### **1) Familiarize yourself with the national/sub-national smoke-free law, if there is one.**

- Is it a 100% smoke-free law or does the law allow for designated smoking areas/rooms
- If it allows for designated smoking area/rooms, what are the guidelines in place?

#### **2) Determine your objective for monitoring air quality.**

What story are you trying to illustrate with your data? (Bullets following each story idea provide some strategies).

- **Objective 1: You have no law, and there is a need to pass a new, strong, smoke-free law**
  - Select [insert a number here]\* public locations to survey.
  - **Story ideas:** You may want to compare the air quality levels of:

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\* The number of places depends entirely on your timelines, types of locations you wish to investigate, and other factors. However, it's better to have more smoking locations than smoke-free locations. An expert will work with you to determine an optimal number for you.

- smoke-free locations [insert a number here]\* to other locations that permit smoking.
  - locations that permit smoking to the dirtiest/most polluted part of your local jurisdiction
  - locations that permit smoking and to other outdoor locations
  - If your smoke-free law is about to be passed, you may also want to compare levels of the same locations before and after the law is implemented.
  - Note: These locations may provide baseline data for an evaluation of a law once it is passed. These locations can be monitored again to determine the changes in air quality resulting from the law.
- **Objective 2: You have a weak law, so there is a need to strengthen an existing smoke-free law**
  - Note: Laws that allow for designated smoking rooms (DSRs)/areas are weak because they don't effectively protect from secondhand smoke.
  - Select [insert a number here]\* public locations to survey.
  - **Story idea:** Compare the levels of smoke-free places to those that allow smoking within DSRs
    - Choose [insert a number here]\* locations that have designated smoking rooms. You may want to sample the air quality in both, the designated smoking and non-smoking areas for each place with DSRs.
    - Also select [insert a number here]\* places that are 100% smoke-free (so that you can compare their levels to places with DSRs). Generally, you will need fewer smoke-free locations than smoking locations in your overall sample.
- **Objective 3: You have an existing smoke-free law, but need to determine whether there is high or low compliance. Is your government effectively enforcing it?**
  - Note: In general, high compliance means that no one is smoking in designated smoke-free areas.
  - Select [insert a number here]\* public locations to survey.
  - **Story idea:** Randomly select [insert a number here]\* locations and identify whether they do or do NOT comply with the law.
    - If there is a high level of compliance (i.e., you don't find anyone smoking in designated smoke-free areas), then take the opportunity to congratulate the local jurisdiction.
    - If there is a low level of compliance, then use your AQM data to advocate for better enforcement.

**ADDITIONALLY:** Remember to consider all other factors that help you determine where to collect data (regardless of the story you tell). For instance:

- Will all of these be in the same city/state or will you want to sample data across cities/states?
- Based on the smoke-free law, will you want to sample restaurants, bars, workplaces, other public places?
- When will you want to visit these places (think about the peak hours for when the place is more populated)?

### 3) Collect your data, based on your strategy. This includes:

- **Observational data** (we have a separate set of instructions for this. Comprehensive observational data is crucial for a good analysis report.) Observations include things like the number of people present, the number of cigarettes being smoked, where smoking is occurring, the size of the place being monitored, the presence of signage and ashtrays,

other sources of pollution, and other observations that may be relevant to your study)

- **Data from the SidePak Aerosol Monitor** (we have a clear set of instructions on how to use the monitor, download data onto a computer and send the results).

#### 4) Establish your strategy for releasing your results

- Identify your target audience (i.e., journalists, citizens, politicians, advocates, enforcement officers) and who would most benefit from the story you're trying to tell.
  - Develop key research-based messages – how are you going to convey your message based on your target audience?
    - Along with your AQM results, your messages should include:
      - Information on the dangers of secondhand smoke.
      - Background on tobacco use in your country.
      - A description of the smoke-free law.
  - Identify opponents and research their likely messages and strategies
  - Establish tactics on how to effectively disseminate your story to your target audience (i.e., presentations, media release, written materials, other)
    - Note: The presentation of the results can be tailored to the audience you wish to reach and the primary message you wish to deliver.
  - Identify key spokespeople (i.e., media, politicians, enforcement officers, advocates, researchers) who can help deliver your message
    - This must be someone that is credible, knows the data, and is well-trained on how to effectively communicate the key message.
- 5) Analyze your data. (Experts will actually analyze this data for you. All you have to do is send us the *SidePak* and observational data. We will be in touch with you about who your AQM point of contact will be).
- 6) Release your results! **REMEMBER...**  
Be sure to remind people that it is everyone's right to breathe clean air.