



## Talking Points: Reducing Tobacco Exposure in Children & Youth

- The Environmental Protection Agency and others have conducted numerous studies that show that indoor air can be two to five times more polluted than the air outdoors, and under some circumstances, can be as much as a hundred to 1,000 times more polluted. Because Americans spend up to 90 percent of their time indoors, it is important to reduce health risks for us all... and especially for children.
- A study published in the American Academy of Pediatrics journal, *Pediatrics*, shows that each year, secondhand smoke exposure is linked to up to 2 million ear infections in children, nearly 530,000 doctor visits for asthma, up to 436,000 episodes of bronchitis in children under five years of age, and up to 190,000 cases of pneumonia in children under five years of age. Protecting children from tobacco products is one of the most important things that a society can do to protect children's health. Children exposed to tobacco are also at increased risk for learning and neurobehavioral problems as well as childhood cancers.
- We strongly support comprehensive smoke-free laws that would prohibit smoking in all public places in Alabama, including restaurants. Smoking and use of tobacco products that produce an emission should be prohibited in all workplaces, including bars, restaurants, and health care facilities. Smoking and use of tobacco products that produce an emission should be banned in outdoor areas frequented by children, including sidewalks, recreational and sports facilities, entertainment venues, and parks.
- The minimum age to purchase tobacco should be increased to 21 years. Middle and high school students often obtain their first tobacco products from older children. Because the vast majority of people who become tobacco dependent do so before 21 years of age, increasing the minimum age of purchase from 18 to 21 years and enforcing this regulation will protect a larger proportion of the population from becoming tobacco-dependent. A study published in 2017 in the journal *Pediatrics* showed that raising the minimum age to 21 would likely have significant public health benefits, including 249,000 fewer premature deaths and 45,000 fewer lung cancer deaths for those born between 2010 and 2019. The study also showed that younger adolescents were more likely to support the initiative, and past research has shown that up to 75 percent of adults favor the higher purchase age for tobacco products.