

## Abstract

Due to Florida's preemptive law, local governments cannot enforce more strict laws than the current state laws. One area the preemptive law affects is the banning of smoking in outdoor public areas. The removal of smoking in outdoor public areas is not permitted at the state level so local municipalities cannot enforce it at the local level. Although some municipalities have implemented voluntary signage in public parks and on public beaches, no research has been conducted on the success or failure of such signage. Through a partnership established between Tobacco Free Alachua and the Department of Parks and Recreation of Gainesville, a study was designed to reduce involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke in public parks and to assess the intervention through data collection and analysis. In this pilot study, archival data was analyzed of smoke-free signage implemented in four public parks in Gainesville, Florida. Discarded cigarette butts were collected surrounding a 25-foot perimeter of selected amenities to measure the rate of smoking in each park before and after the intervention signs were placed. The evaluation consisted of two studies: a 5 week baseline period followed by a 5 week post-intervention period and then a one year follow-up measured over a 5 week period. The primary study showed a decline in butts collected with an overall 38% decrease from baseline numbers. At the one year follow-up, the study showed a slight increase from the post-intervention period but still had an overall 15% decrease in butts from baseline numbers. The results presented provide evidence that voluntary signage works in the short-term but may fade over time. The study did not present enough evidence to determine the long-term effects of smoke-free signage in Gainesville parks. With regard to recommendations for future research, it is important to control for confounders and keep detailed records of sign quantity and placement. Signs might benefit from some type of "booster" to remind patrons of the smoke-free policy. This pilot study presents preliminary data which can inform future research to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke in outdoor public areas.