

# SECTION 11: RESPECT CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

To a great degree, the success of a school's tobacco-free policy depends on understanding cultural and situational differences among students, especially those most likely to use tobacco products. Knowledge and appreciation of these differences is essential for creating and enforcing tobacco-free school policies appropriate for the students in our schools and supporting success for the students who are most at risk.

Here are six areas to consider when implementing and communicating your policy:

- **LANGUAGE**

Ensure that written and verbal messages are provided in the languages used by both students and adults in each community.

- **READING LEVEL**

Write materials, including letters to parents, in clearly understood language, preferably at a 6th grade reading level, using short sentences and simple vocabulary. It is also helpful to add visual images that communicate the same message.

- **TRADITIONAL PRACTICES**

Tobacco has been used by Native American communities as offerings to the spirits, for planting, for gathering food, for healings and for ceremonies. In these communities, it is important to distinguish concerns about commercial tobacco from tobacco used in a sacred and traditional context. ***24/7's policies do not apply to sacred tobacco. Our policies apply to commercial tobacco only, and we will never prohibit sacred tobacco.***

- **IMAGES THAT REFLECT THE COMMUNITY**

When creating or selecting images to include in written materials, include people, landscapes and buildings that represent your community.

- **TYPE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS USED IN THE COMMUNITY**

Research which types of tobacco products are more heavily used in your area, and emphasize those products in your communications. For example, smokeless tobacco (such as chew or nicotine pouches) is not heavily used in some areas, but it is the primary tobacco product in others.

- **DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL**

Tailor communication to the age of students. For example, at secondary schools, posters could include information about the effects of tobacco products, whereas at elementary schools, simple signs with the rules about tobacco are sufficient.