

Serena Chen Biography



Serena Chen is a technical assistance consultant for The Loop, a UCSF project funded by the California Public Health Department Tobacco Control Program. She has worked in tobacco control since 1991 and directed tobacco control programs and advocacy for the American Lung Association in California for 22 years including the Bay Area Smoke-free Housing Project for 10 years.

Her work has been focused on working with local advocates to help cities adopt tobacco control laws covering secondhand smoke protections, emerging nicotine products for recreational use, and local control over how and where tobacco may be sold.

She is considered one of the pioneers of legislative smoke-free multi-unit housing laws. In 2007, she was instrumental in mobilizing community and media support for the adoption of the nation's first smoke-free housing law that took smoking out of all living units in the city of Belmont. She and her smoke-free housing staff subsequently worked on over three dozen smoke-free housing ordinances with over 2 dozen opting for the 100% smoke-free units option. Over 1.5 million Californians now live in cities where smoking is not allowed inside apartment and attached condo units.

Her success has been based on providing local residents with the advocacy tools and confidence to move local officials to act to protect the public's health. In addition to working with California advocates, Serena has also been asked to provide technical assistance to tobacco control advocates in British Columbia, Hawaii, Oregon, Minnesota and New York City and for the CDC. The State of Hawaii adopted legislation to ban smoking in all public housing after the state's tobacco-free coalition invited her to conduct 3-days of trainings and strategy sessions, and media interviews in 2011.

Serena has worked on over 50 ordinances covering smoke-free workplaces, outdoor public places, tobacco retailer licensing, zoning restrictions, flavoring bans, and billboard restrictions. She also worked on laws restricting where electronic smoking devices may be used and how they may be sold in eight cities and BART and AC Transit.

She regularly provides technical assistance and conducts trainings for advocates, public housing residents, landlords/managers, graduate students, researchers, public housing administrators, and city staff.

Serena served for nine years on the Community Advisory Board for the state's legal technical assistance center now called Change Lab Solutions, and for 5 years on the Scientific Advisory Committee of the state's Tobacco-Related Disease Research program administered by the University of California's Office of the President.

Prior her work in tobacco control, Serena worked as a community organizer, community mental health social worker; an award-winning broadcast and print journalist; and a community college instructor in ethnic studies. Both of her degrees are from the University of California, Berkeley - a masters in social welfare and a bachelor's degree in sociology.