



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Dallas County Health Department promotes healthy lifestyles by becoming a tobacco-free campus Sept. 1

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As a former tobacco user, Jackie Holliday knows how difficult it is to quit smoking and the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Holliday is administrator of the Dallas County Health Department and takes his responsibility to promote healthy behaviors for everyone seriously. Even though the use of tobacco has declined in recent years, it remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.

That is among the reasons Holliday is announcing today the transition of the Dallas County Health Department from a smoke-free facility to a tobacco-free campus on Sept. 1. The tobacco-free campus policy prohibits the use of tobacco product anywhere on the Health Department property at all times, including grounds, buildings and vehicles. Cigarette receptacles will be removed and parking lot signage installed reminding staff and visitors that the department's property is tobacco free.

"We want to create a tobacco-free environment," said Holliday. "Prevention and promoting healthy behaviors are fundamental to our public health mission. With that in mind, and with the support of Dr. Donald Williamson, State Health Officer, I decided to establish the county health department as a tobacco-free campus."

Administrators and health officials collaborated for more than a year to establish a timeline, survey the opinions of both employees and clients, identify free cessation resources, and develop a custom policy and notification materials to alert the community, clients and employees of the change.

"We surveyed staff and clients and received overwhelming support for the tobacco-free policy," said Niko Phillips, tobacco prevention and control coordinator. "More than 80 percent of the staff and nearly 70 percent of the clients were in support of the tobacco-free initiative."

Exposure to tobacco smoke – even occasional smoking or secondhand smoke – causes immediate damage to your body that can lead to serious illness, according to U.S. Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin.

Having a tobacco-free campus protects staff and clients from the dangers of secondhand smoke and encourages others to become tobacco free. "I encourage other worksites to carefully evaluate the advantages of establishing a tobacco-free policy," said Holliday. "The goal is to

support cessation and the subsequent improved health effects that reduce absenteeism and promote increase in production.”

Holliday added that other county health departments in Public Health Area 7 will soon make this same transition. “Health department offices in Choctaw, Hale, Lowndes, Marengo, Perry, Sumter and Wilcox counties will become tobacco-free campuses effective Dec. 1,” he said.

Materials promoting the state’s free resources to help quit tobacco use are available in public waiting areas at the health department. Both the Alabama Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-Quit-Now and the online service, www.alabamاقuitnow.com, offer master’s level counselors, an individualized quit plan and four weeks of free nicotine therapy replacement patches to users enrolled in counseling and who are medically eligible.

For more information, contact Niko Phillips, tobacco prevention area coordinator, (334) 877-2876.

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