

“Healing Inside and Out: Massachusetts Tobacco Free Hospitals” Initiative January 2011

- The Massachusetts Hospital Association (MHA) is launching an educational outreach and assistance campaign to encourage hospitals throughout the Commonwealth to become tobacco-free. Our hospital/facility/healthcare system is joining this important effort to promote public health and encourage healthy living in our community.
- “Tobacco free” means no tobacco use of any kind is permitted on campus by hospital staff, patients or visitors. This includes not only cigarettes, but also other tobacco products (such as chewing tobacco) anywhere on hospital property.
- We are taking this important step for a number of reasons - Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the US. The negative impact of tobacco use on health is well documented. An estimated 50 percent of tobacco users die as a result of their addiction, and just last December the US Surgeon General issued a finding that "[t]here is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Any exposure to tobacco smoke - even an occasional cigarette or exposure to secondhand smoke - is harmful."
- As a healthcare provider, we feel that becoming tobacco-free will boost our effectiveness in treating patients by improving the overall quality and safety of our property.
- The tobacco-free effort is a natural extension of our smoke-free policy, which has limited smoking to certain designated areas outside the hospital. The new initiative extends the smoking and tobacco use prohibition to all outside hospital properties as well. The new policy is different from earlier smoking/tobacco use policies at our hospital in the following ways:
 - While smoking within the facility has long been prohibited, smoking and tobacco use in cars, outside of the building and in designated areas was permitted. With the new policy, tobacco use will be prohibited in all areas on campus.
 - To use tobacco products at a tobacco-free facility, one will have to leave the premises completely.
- We are prohibiting tobacco use even on outdoor hospital property. Secondhand smoke is a proven cause of cancer, can worsen symptoms of pulmonary conditions such as asthma or chronic bronchitis, and can cause eye irritation and nausea in some. We believe that as a healthcare provider we must provide all patients, staff and visitors with a safe and healthy environment.
- When patients who use tobacco are admitted to the hospital, our staff informs will inform them that the hospital is tobacco-free and tobacco use of any kind will not be permitted anywhere on the campus. We will offer cessation resources and tobacco-abatement products.

- We will also be making cessation resources and programs available to hospital visitors, and to any and all of our employees who use tobacco and wish to quit. While **it is not mandatory that employees cease using tobacco products**, we strongly encourage them to consider quitting for the benefit of their overall health.
- Tobacco use is responsible for over 8,000 deaths a year in Massachusetts and costs Massachusetts about \$1.7 billion annually in lost productivity due to premature death. Tobacco use in and around hospitals poses major health and safety risks.
- We respect individuals' right to choose to use tobacco products, but we ask that you refrain from using such products while on the hospital campus. As a healthcare provider, the hospital has the right to prohibit tobacco use on all its properties to provide a healthy and safe environment for those we serve.

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