

2010 KY Public Health Association Position Statement

Support for Tobacco-free Healthcare Facilities, Colleges, and Universities

The Kentucky Public Health Association (KPHA) supports healthcare facilities, colleges, and universities that promote a healthy environment through tobacco-free campus initiatives. The dangers of tobacco use and secondhand smoke are well-documented, leading to premature death and chronic, debilitating disease. Kentucky spends over \$1 billion per year treating people who get sick from using tobacco products. Every year there are approximately 438,000 premature deaths related to tobacco use¹. In 2006 the U.S. Surgeon General stated, “The debate is over. The science is clear. Secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance but a serious health hazard.”² The use of tobacco products has severe health consequences.

Tobacco-free policies put students, patients, employees, and visitors first by providing a healthy, tobacco-free environment and decreasing exposure to secondhand smoke. Tobacco-free campuses need to prohibit the use of smokeless or non-combustible tobacco products. Smokeless tobacco products are not a safe alternative to smoking, leading to premature death from oral and pancreatic cancers³. E-cigarettes, or electronic cigarettes, are the newest product designed to bypass smoke-free policies. E-cigarettes turn nicotine into vapor rather than smoke. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration released a statement in July 2009 stating that e-cigarettes are not a safe alternative to smoking. They contain carcinogens and toxic chemicals;⁴ this position is supported by the World Health Organization.⁵ It is recommended that e-cigarettes be covered by tobacco-free policies on healthcare and college campuses.

To promote compliance and facilitate tobacco cessation, KPHA supports the provision of evidence-based tobacco treatment for employees, patients, and students when campuses go tobacco-free, as suggested by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services⁶. Over 40 healthcare facilities in Kentucky have implemented tobacco-free healthcare campus policies. Over 300 colleges and universities across the United States have implemented smoke-free or tobacco-free policies including the University of Kentucky. The Kentucky Public Health Association (KPHA) supports these public health policies, and encourages all healthcare facilities, colleges, and universities in Kentucky to protect the health of Kentuckians by implementing tobacco-free policies.

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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Annual smoking-attributable mortality, years of potential life lost, and productivity losses---United States, 1997-2001. *MMWR* 2005;54(25)625—628.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2006). *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA, Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease and Prevention and Promotion, Office of Smoking and Health.

³ American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2009*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2009.

⁴ Food and Drug Administration News Release: FDA and Public Health Experts Warn about Electronic Cigarettes. <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm173222.htm>

⁵ World Health Organization News Release: Marketers of Electronic Cigarettes Should Halt Unproved Therapy Claims. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2008/pr34/en/index.html>

⁶ Fiore MC, Jaén CR, Baker TB, et al. *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update*. Clinical Practice Guideline. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service. May 2008.