

July 1, 2003

SMOKE FREE POLICY FOR VA HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides smoking policies for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facilities, and covers all patients, staff, volunteers, and visitors.

2. BACKGROUND: VA health care facilities are Smoke-Free and smoking is allowed only in designated smoking areas.

3. POLICY: It is VA policy that each VA health care facility must establish and maintain a smoking area in a detached building that is accessible, heated, and air conditioned; and that this detached building must meet the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) requirements for ventilation.

4. ACTION

a. **Health Care Facility Director.** The VA health care facility Director is responsible for ensuring that:

(1) Smoking on facility grounds is allowed to the extent that it does not interfere with safety and public access. Entrances, particularly main entrances, to a health care building are not to be used as an approved smoking area. Only the detached building, or designated open areas on the grounds, is to be used for smoking.

(2) In instances where the facility has established and maintained an indoor smoking area where only long-term care and/or mental health program patients may smoke, this smoking room(s) must be designed as such, and use ventilated systems which are in compliance with American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Standard 62-2001 (or most recent version). **NOTE:** *Every effort needs to be made to ensure that any indoor smoking location will not interfere with the safety of non-smokers.*

(3) Essential steps of enforcement are followed, to include:

(a) Communicating the smoke-free policy, both verbally and in writing, to patients, visitors, and staff.

(b) Requesting that all employees assist in enforcing the policy, as with any other policy enforced in a VA health care facility.

(c) Reminding individuals not complying with the policy, of the policy in a friendly manner; however, if verbal communication is ineffective in promoting compliance, VA Form 6160, Courtesy Violation Notice, is to be used.

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(d) Posting signs at each entrance to VA health care facilities indicating that the facility is Smoke-Free and that smoking is allowed only in the designated Smoking Area(s). **NOTE:** *A map showing the location of the detached building smoking area and any authorized open-air location is highly recommended.*

(e) Posting information on the facility's smoking cessation resources in the smoking shelter, to assist smokers interested in quitting.

(f) Requiring acute care, ambulatory care, outpatients, and domiciliary patients to use the detached building smoking area.

(4) A facility Smoke-Free Coordinator is designated.

b. **Smoke-Free Coordinator.** The Smoke-Free Coordinator is responsible for providing support to help ensure the success of the facility's Smoke-Free policies.

c. **Vet Centers.** Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Centers are smoke-free facilities. Because of the potential for additional emotional and/or physiological stress among clients, consideration must be given to frequent breaks during counseling sessions to permit clients to leave the building to smoke. **NOTE:** *Participation in smoking and tobacco use cessation is to be strongly encouraged.*

5. REFERENCES

a. Public Law 102-585, Section 526.

b. JCAHO Standard Management of the Environment of Care, EC.1.1.2.

c. ASHRAE Standard 62-2001, "Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality."

d. Presidential Executive Order 13058, "Protecting Federal Employees and the Public From Exposure to Tobacco Smoke in Federal Workplace," August 7, 1997.

e. National Fire Protection Association, Standard 101, Life Safety Code, 2000 edition, Chapter 19.

f. National Fire Protection Association, Standard 99, Health Care Facilities, 2002 edition, Chapters 5, 9, and 13.

g. VA Manual MP-3, Part III, Section 32.36, dated October 12, 1977.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Public Health Strategic Health Care Group in the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (13B) is responsible for this Directive. Questions may be referred to the Director, Public Health National Prevention Program, at (202) 273-8929.

7. RECISSIONS: VHA Directive 98-006 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires July 31, 2008.

S/ Nevin M. Weaver for
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Under Secretary for Health

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