

November 15, 2005

To All MRHC Employees,

As many of you already know, effective January 1, 2006, Mercy Regional Health Center will take a proactive step to improve the environment for healthy living by implementing a tobacco free policy on all of its campuses, both owned and leased. The policy will apply to all patients, visitors, medical staff members, vendors and employees. This means as of January 1, 2006, no tobacco use of any kind will be permitted inside hospital buildings, on our parking lots, or anywhere on the grounds of our facilities.

While much of this letter applies to those employees who currently smoke or use tobacco products, I want to encourage each employee to be thinking of the impact of this environmental change for all of us. We need to encourage those employees who are making a decision to quit smoking and acknowledge what positive step it is for them. There will undoubtedly be instances where patients or visitors might not agree with the policy and you will be challenged to live out our mission and values as you communicate with them. Please undertake these activities in the most positive manner possible, remembering that our goal is to improve the health of all who come to Mercy Regional Health Center.

As January approaches we want all employees to know the steps Mercy has taken in preparation for the upcoming ban on tobacco use on our campuses. Press releases were sent out in October along with letters to area physicians and businesses letting them know about the new policy. We have communicated the message in our newsletter and other internal communications, and there will soon be more information in the Manhattan Mercury and on local radio stations.

As we draw closer to the effective date of this change, we want to re-state the message that we're not asking all employees to stop using tobacco, but we are requiring all employees to refrain from using tobacco during work hours. Recognizing what a challenging process that might be, we are making nicotine patches (for employee's use only) available in the gift shop at Mercy's cost of \$14.50 (per step) until July 1, 2006. Payments for the patches may be arranged for via payroll deduction, similar to other gift shop purchases.

Smoking cessation classes are also available to employees through Cardiopulmonary Services. Please note: registration is required one week prior to the initial class, and a personal or phone interview with each participant must take place prior to the first session of the class. You may contact Don Hedden, Director of Cardiopulmonary Services at 776-2878 for further information.

Smoking Cessation Classes are currently scheduled for:

November 31 to January 5, 2005 0900 to 1000 these are Thursdays
December 7, 2005 to January 11, 2006 1200 to 1300 these are Wednesdays

(All meetings will be held at the College Avenue Campus ICU Conference Room.)

Another option available for employees is to schedule an appointment through Occupational Health for an assessment which could result in a prescription for a stop smoking medication. The office visit will be provided at no expense to the employee, and the prescription will be available at Mercy's cost. Employees will be expected to pay for the medication via payroll deduction, and that process will be coordinated by the Occupational Health staff. This program will run through June, 2006 as well. If you're interested in finding out more about this option, please contact Occupational Health at 776-2813.

Finally, the updated Human Resource policy that defines the new guidelines will be distributed to managers at the next Management Council meeting, in early December, and will then be made available on the "G:" drive for all employees to access. Keep in mind that the effective date of the policy is January 1, 2006, but by distributing it early we hope to have everyone clearly informed of the specifics of the changes in advance of that effective date.

Thank you for your cooperation with Mercy Regional Health Center's Tobacco-Free policy and for helping maintain a healthier environment for everyone. We have also included some talking points for you to use in the event you are asked questions by friends or neighbors regarding Mercy's new policy. Please feel free to contact Human Resources or your department director if you have additional questions regarding this important issue.

Sincerely,

Steve W. Hodges, SPHR
Vice President - Human Resources
Mercy Regional Health Center
785-587-4248