



# Western Maryland Health System UPDATE

Memorial Hospital • Sacred Heart Hospital • St. Vincent de Paul Nursing Center

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*Please Post!*

July 19, 2004

## **Tobacco-Free Environment Planned at WMHS**

Dear Fellow Employee:

The mission of the Western Maryland Health System is to improve the health status of the individuals we serve. One of the ways we can do that is to ensure a healthy environment at WMHS for our patients, their families, and our staff. With smoking and breathing second-hand smoke being the leading causes of many illnesses, I believe we have an obligation to the community to address this issue. Therefore, we will be implementing a new policy to create totally tobacco-free campuses as of January 1, 2005.

Although our buildings have been tobacco-free for many years, we have permitted smoking in designated areas outside of our facilities. These smoking areas will be eliminated on January 1 in order to eliminate the dangers from second-hand smoke and to continue to fulfill our mission by promoting a healthy lifestyle. The new policy will apply to all WMHS facilities and their grounds, including parking lots.

I realize that this change will be difficult for people who smoke, and we are announcing this new policy now in order to give them time to prepare for this change. A team has been working to identify ways for us to ease this transition for smokers. One of the ways will be having nicotine replacement products, such as nicotine gum or lozenges, available for patients and visitors. These products also will be available through the WMHS Pharmacy at cost for employees. For those who may want to take this opportunity to quit smoking, we will expand our offering of smoking cessation programs over the next few months, as well.

As a leading provider of healthcare services, I believe we must address a public health issue as serious and pervasive as smoking. I hope our decision to create a healthier environment by going to totally tobacco-free campus will encourage other organizations in the community to do the same. Your cooperation as we implement this new policy will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

  
Barry Ronan, President/CEO