

## Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center Tobacco Free Policy

Our leadership is pleased to inform you that after thorough review of health care data and national trends related to **tobacco use and tobacco free environments, the decision was made for all of the inpatient psychiatric facilities and campuses operated by the department to become tobacco-free, including the Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center. The facility became tobacco free on January 4, 2010. This created a tobacco-free environment for patients and staff.** As health care organizations, we are committed to the health and safety of our employees and patients. We believe that we have the responsibility to take a leadership role on this major health issue.

Almost half of U.S. state mental health systems have implemented these changes with great success. Consider the following facts:

- People with serious mental illness die 25 years younger than the general population due largely to conditions caused or worsened by smoking.
- Smokers with schizophrenia spend more than one-quarter of their total income on cigarettes.
- Tobacco use interferes with psychiatric medications.
- Although more than two-thirds of smokers want to quit, only 3% are able to quit on their own. They are far more successful with the kind of help we will be offering.
- Even highly addicted smokers with mental illness can quit and are more likely to succeed with a combination of medications and behavioral therapy.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) labels secondhand smoke as a “Class A” carcinogen placing it in the same category as asbestos and arsenic.
- Inhaling secondhand smoke immediately increases your risk of developing heart disease.
- Each year, more than 50,000 non-smoking Americans will die from disease and illness related to secondhand smoke exposure.
- The US Surgeon General has concluded that 100% smoke-free policies are the only way to completely eliminate secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace, and that air cleansing or air filtration systems cannot protect nonsmokers from the toxic chemicals found in secondhand smoke.
- Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.