



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department Applauds New Federal Rule Banning Smoking in Public Housing



News Release: December 2, 2016

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BURLINGTON – Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD praised the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for its approval this week of a new rule that requires a smoke-free environment in public housing residences.

“This is a tremendous step forward in protecting children and people with chronic illnesses like asthma from the harm caused by second-hand smoke,” Dr. Chen said.

According to the **announcement** made by HUD Secretary Julián Castro, the rule will prohibit “lit tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars or pipes) in all living units, indoor common areas, administrative offices and all outdoor areas within 25 feet of housing and administrative office buildings.”

“Second-hand smoke has more than 4,000 chemicals, and the home is where most children are exposed to it,” said Dr. Chen. The 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 41 percent of Vermont students reported being in the same room in the past week with someone who was smoking. “Even if you are only around the smoke for a short amount of time, it’s as if you are the one who is smoking.”

Commissioner Chen said the Health Department submitted comments to HUD in favor of the then-proposed rule because reducing the impact of smoking can yield widespread health benefits.

“In Vermont, three behaviors – tobacco use, poor diet, and lack of physical activity lead to four diseases – cancer, heart disease and stroke, diabetes and lung disease, which account for more than 50 percent of deaths,” said Dr. Chen. “From schools, to local businesses, to the state and federal government, we all have a role to play in creating healthy environments. This rule will help give everyone an equal opportunity to be healthy, no matter where they live.”

For more information about Vermont’s smoke-free laws, tobacco control data and free quit help from **802Quits**, visit healthvermont.gov/prevent/tobacco.

Learn more about Vermont’s 3-4-50 initiative at healthvermont.gov/3-4-50

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