

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 21, 2019

VA modifies smoke-free policies at health care facilities to include workers aimed at increasing the quality of care for Veterans

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) commitment to a smoke-free health care environment for Veterans, in October, the department will extend its smoke-free policies to include employees at its health care facilities.

This follows the department's June 10 announcement of a new policy restricting smoking by patients, visitors, volunteers, contractors and vendors at its health care facilities. The integration of these two efforts guarantees a fully smoke-free environment for Veterans.

"This policy change is consistent with our mission to promote a healthy environment for patients, visitors and employees at our facilities and is an important element of improving our health care system," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "It will reduce the harmful effects of smoking, including exposure to second and third-hand smoke, as well as increase safety and reduce fire hazards caused by smoking."

The VA has collaborated with key stakeholders to update and recertify the employee policy to be consistent with department's commitment to Veterans and the community. Implementation of the employee smoke-free policy will be completed no later than January 2020 based on employee union-negotiated timelines.

The Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) smoke-free policy applies to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, any other combustion of tobacco and non-Federal Drug Administration approved electronic nicotine delivery systems, including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

To learn more about health risks associated with smoking, visit the Surgeon General's website at <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/tobacco/index.html> or <https://smokefree.gov/>.

VHA has resources and programs to assist employees in their smoke free journey and these can be found at the following VHA website at <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/>

For additional information about the policy visit <https://www.va.gov/health/smokefree/>.

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