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FEDERAL PROPOSAL MOVES AMERICAN HOMES IN A SMOKE-FREE DIRECTION

Four out of five non-smokers would prefer a smoke-free building policy

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Pensacola, Fla. – Floridians living in standardized public housing may be breathing easier soon, as Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julian Castro has introduced a smoke-free policy in HUD-affiliated public housing authorities nationwide.

The Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida (BTFF), the state’s comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation program, has been working to educate public and private housing managers about the benefits of smoke-free policies for over three years and is encouraged by this development.

“Smoke-free public housing is another step in the right direction to improve the health of children, adults and families who are disproportionately affected by tobacco,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “We also know that implementing smoke-free policies in multiunit housing produces benefits for the properties including reduced maintenance and turn-over costs, and fewer resident disputes related to smoking neighbors.”

The bureau’s list of multiunit properties that have enacted voluntary smoke-free policies has grown to more than 1,000 properties since tracking began in 2010. Public housing units have also been making the change.

Benefits of smoke-free buildings include:

- Better health: Smoke-free air laws encourage smokers to quit, decrease secondhand smoke exposure among nonsmokers, and reduce heart attack and asthma hospitalizations.
- Decreased secondhand smoke exposure: Secondhand smoke can travel from other units through doorways, cracks in walls, electrical lines, plumbing, and ventilation systems.
- Increased safety: Smoke-free policies reduce fire risks for residents, owners and property managers.

“We are very pleased about this announcement,” states Vanessa Phillips, Florida Department of Health in Escambia County Tobacco Prevention Coordinator. “Local HUD housing sites have recently been exploring smoke-free policies. Any Escambia County, Florida property manager who would like to establish a smoke-free policy for their housing facility may contact Tobacco Free Florida in Escambia for assistance.”

Smokers residing in HUD-affiliated public housing should be aware that, although difficult, it is possible to quit smoking. Over 63 percent of adults who have ever smoked have quit, and there are more former smokers in Florida than current smokers. Having a comprehensive quit plan

increases the success rate. Tobacco Free Florida offers 3 Ways to Quit, which are free and easy to access:

- **CALL:** Call Tobacco Free Florida at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a Quit Coach® who will help you assess your addiction and assist you in creating a personalized quit plan.
- **CLICK:** Tobacco Free Florida's online cessation tool can be accessed at tobaccofreeflorida.com/webcoach.
- **COME IN:** In person help is available from Area Health Education Centers, find one near you at tobaccofreeflorida.com/ahec

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