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# Uniontown Hospital Media

## Release

### Hospital moves to tobacco-free campus March 1



Uniontown Hospital has announced that the campus will be entirely tobacco-free beginning March 1 for all patients, visitors and employees. In a move that mirrors those of other major health care systems in the region, hospital officials said that the new policy will prohibit the use of any and all tobacco related products, including electronic cigarettes, by patients, visitors and staff on hospital grounds.

“This policy is something that is important to us because it represents a commitment to ensuring the best health for our patients, their families and our staff,” Uniontown Hospital CEO Steve Handy said. “We are dedicated to making a healthy difference in every life we touch. That’s not just a motto. It’s our heart.”

Handy said that the move is an effort to create an environment where respiratory discomfort from cigarette smoke is never an issue, for those directly ingesting the toxins and for those who have to endure the smoke second hand.

“We want to be the standard by which good health is measured,” he said. The hospital had long prohibited smoking on campus, but had established an outdoor smoking area for patients, visitors and staff to utilize.

That area will be closed as of March 1.

Part of the new policy includes the implementation of a tobacco-free shift for all employees. Under the terms of the policy, all hospital employees must commit to working a tobacco-free shift while on hospital grounds.

The hospital began an internal education effort regarding the change months in advance and has offered free classes and “quit” assistance to all employees. The educational material includes detailed information

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regarding the harmful effects of smoking or using chewing tobacco, as well as the harmful effects of using newer devices like electronic cigarettes and vapor pipes.

In addition to still providing the user with nicotine, the electronic devices also pose a fire risk, hospital officials said.

While Handy said there are a few people in the community who may view the move as an infringement on their liberties, he is hopeful that the policy will be met with appreciation and support.

“As a community hospital, we need to be good stewards and help to set the most healthful example,” Handy said. “This move is all about health. We are committed to making a healthy difference in all the lives we touch.”

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