

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is PMHS moving to smoke-free/tobacco-free shifts?

A: PMHS is committed to maintaining a healthy environment for persons served and visitors, and ensuring their experience with us is positive by reducing their exposure to tobacco products. Our mission as a health care organization is to support and promote healthy lifestyles throughout our communities. **According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and premature death in the United States.** It's time for us to lead by example within our region. By extending our mission, we join other like-minded health care leaders such as Baylor Health Care System, Cleveland Clinic, and Mayo Clinic. Consider this: Studies indicate that the skin, hair, and clothing of smokers can carry toxic residues (called third-hand smoke), including several known to cause cancer. These toxic, residual compounds can be transferred to others by contact. We care about the well-being of every employee. We want to be good members of the community. Since the early 2000's PMHS has been a leader in the provision of best practice tobacco cessation and prevention services within our region. In 2012 we began to take many of our sites tobacco free and this is a natural evolution of that commitment.

Q: Aren't PMHS's campuses already smoke-free?

A: Yes. PMHS adopted a Clean Air/Smoke and Tobacco-Free Campus policy in 2007. Tobacco use currently is not permitted on many PMHS properties by anyone, including persons served, visitors, and employees. This will be an extension of the current policy.

Q: What does a smoke-free shift entail?

A: For all employees, physicians, volunteers, contractors, students, and others acting for PMHS, the Clean Air/Smoke and Tobacco-Free Campus policy will be extended to include no tobacco for the entire work shift/assignment. For our staff, a work shift under this policy will be defined as the time staff members report to work until the shift is over. **Additionally, these individuals cannot smell of smoke during their work shift.**

Q: What tobacco products does the policy cover?

A: Tobacco products include, but are not limited to, **cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snus, and pipe smoking.** Other devices which contain tobacco or other smoke or vapor-producing products, such as **e-cigarettes**, also are covered under this policy.

Q: When do the changes to the policy go into effect?

A: **February 1, 2015.** The policy change is being announced in advance to allow time for individuals to prepare. For those who choose to stop their tobacco use, this notice provides time for individuals to access PMHS's tobacco-cessation tools, resources, and support, begin the cessation process and even fail along the way until they reach success.

There are a number of cessation tools and resources available, including information located under **Tobacco Resources** on the G Drive, telephonic and in person support, health coaching, nicotine replacement products, and *LifeSolutions*, PMHS's Employee Assistance Program. These resources are available to family members as well.

Q: Do I have to quit smoking or chewing tobacco?

A: No. We are only asking that you refrain from smoking or using tobacco products during your work shift.

Q: Can I smoke on my break?

A: No. Paid and unpaid breaks are still considered part of your shift under this policy.

Q: What is considered a work-shift?

A: For our staff, a work shift will be defined as the time staff members report to work until the shift is over.

Q: Isn't smoking/tobacco use a personal legal right?

A: In accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, PMHS is permitted to limit or eliminate smoking and tobacco use on the property and during work shifts. We are not asking employees, physicians, volunteers, contractors, students, or others acting for PMHS to quit smoking/tobacco use. However, we are asking that these individuals refrain from tobacco use, including smoking, during their shift. PMHS will provide resources to help with tobacco cessation, including telephonic or online support, health coaching, nicotine replacement products, and *LifeSolutions*.

Q: I'm not an employee, but I do provide services within a PMHS facility. Does this policy apply to me?

This policy applies to everyone on PMHS property, including employees, physicians, volunteers, contractors, students, and others acting on behalf of PMHS.

Q: Does this policy apply to PMHS persons served, visitors, and guests?

Yes. PMHS established smoke-free campuses in 2007, which applies to all individuals on our property, including persons served, visitors, and guests. Although these particular individuals may smoke or use tobacco products outside our property, PMHS staff is encouraged to share smoking and tobacco-cessation resources and information with them.

Q: Will PMHS still hire applicants who use tobacco products?

A: Yes. Unlike some other hospitals and health care systems, PMHS will continue to hire applicants who choose to use tobacco products outside their work shift. Recruiters will inform job applicants and candidates of PMHS's Clean Air/Smoke and Tobacco-Free Campus policy during the interview process. However, we hope any employees or applicants who are ready to quit smoking will take advantage of the many tools and resources we have available to assist in tobacco cessation.

Q: What if I am not ready to quit using tobacco at this time?

A: We know not everyone may be ready to make a commitment to smoking cessation, and you don't have to quit smoking completely. However, you will not be allowed to smoke or use tobacco products during your work shift. Wherever you are in the process, PMHS has the tools and resources to support your tobacco cessation efforts, as detailed above.

Q: I want to quit using tobacco, but I'm not sure if I can do it on my own. What is PMHS doing to help me?

A: We have many free smoking cessation resources available to you through PMHS including our Health Plan resources, PMHS cessation specialists, nicotine replacement products, and *LifeSolutions*. Tobacco cessation medications and nicotine replacement products are covered by PMHS Health plans. If you do not have our Health plan coverage PMHS tobacco cessation specialists can provide nicotine replacement products to any employee or family member who agrees to participate in cessation programming. A PMHS cessations specialist can help you explore resources available.

Q: My spouse smokes as well. How can I help him/her quit with me?

A: Spouses and dependents can also take advantage of tools and resources offered by PMHS, our Health Plans and LifeSolutions, including free nicotine replacement products if not covered by health insurance.

Q: I've tried the patch, it hasn't worked for me. Is there anything else I could try?

A: ABSOLUTELY! Tobacco dependence is a 3 pronged addiction: physical, behavioral, and emotional. The patch and other quit aids address the physical dependence and prevent withdrawal. If the patch has not worked, there are a number of other nicotine replacement products such as the gum, lozenge, nasal spray, and oral inhaler. There are also several medications that can help with nicotine withdrawal. Another and very important step in smoking cessation is to seek counseling to deal with the other aspects of breaking the nicotine cycle. PMHS has cessation counselors available and there is also telephone support through the PA Quitline and the American Cancer Society. Additionally, staff can speak with Dr. Brenda Freeman about their quit. A tobacco cessation specialist is available to discuss resources and help you develop a plan that works for you.

Q: How is it helping the persons served if I'm not smoking near them?

A: Third hand smoke is residue from tobacco smoke that can cling to fabric long after someone has finished smoking. The resulting smell can be an irritant to our persons served and fellow caregivers, contributing to the overall experience within our facilities.

Q: Where can I find more information on PMHS's tobacco-cessation resources?

A: PMHS offers vast support for tobacco and smoking cessation. See the Tobacco Resources folder listed on the G drive. Also feel free to contact a tobacco specialist:

Mike Luxemburger, 412.320.2323, MLuxemburger@pmhs.org

Bill Elliott, 412.697.2018, WElliott@mercybh.org.

Jennifer Hoffman 412.442.1999. jhoffman@pmhs.org

Ebony Evans 412.697.2015, eevans@pmhs.org

Kristen Walker 412.320.2388, kwalker@pmhs.org

In addition to the above PMHS resources, the *confidential* Pennsylvania Free Quitline is available at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

Q: How can PMHS ask me not to smoke or use tobacco products on my unpaid breaks? Isn't that my own personal time? Can't I continue to smoke off-campus in my own car, at a restaurant, etc.?

PMHS made this decision to move to tobacco- and smoke-free shifts for one very important reason: our persons served. For example, when staff members who smoke during their breaks return to work, they bring the smell of tobacco smoke into the workplace. We've received comments from persons served confirming this and complaints that the smoke scent was offensive. We believe that one way to improve our persons served' experience is to restrict smoking and tobacco use during a shift. This initiative is not about policing employees when they are off the clock and off the property during their shift. Nor is this initiative about violating personal rights. This initiative is about helping ensure that our persons served — who come to us for care — have the best experience we can provide. Also, not to be ignored is the tremendous health benefit this initiative may provide to our staff who currently use tobacco.

We know this will definitely be a challenge for many, and that is why we are taking time to inform staff and to provide assistance and resources to those who wish to quit or manage the urge to use tobacco products during their shift. In the end, it's about health — our persons served our community, and yours.

Q: What should I do if I smell smoke on a peer or a colleague at work?

A: This is a sensitive area but does require action. The type of action could be determined by your relationship with that person. One could try to address the issue with humor, and say, "Gee, you really do smell like you've been smoking," or take a more direct approach and say, "Have you been smoking?" Listen to the response from the co-worker and choose your comments accordingly. It is important not to lecture but to be straight forward. One could remind the person that PMHS is now smoke free and they have violated the policy. On the G drive, in the Tobacco Resource folder, there is a resource called: *How to Ask Someone to Stop Smoking around You*.

Q: What will be the disciplinary action taken if someone violates this policy and smokes on their shift?

A: Managers are encouraged to coach and educate staff on the policy expectations and ensure that they are aware of resources and tools to assist them in complying with this policy. However, repeat violations of the policy may result in corrective action per PMHS's Corrective Action and Discharge policy.

Q: How will this policy be enforced?

A: This policy applies to employees, physicians, volunteers, contractors, students, and others acting on behalf of PMHS. Managers will be encouraged to coach and educate staff on the policy expectations and ensure that they are aware of resources and tools to assist them in complying with this policy. However, repeat violations of the policy may result in corrective action per PMHS's Corrective Action and Discharge policy.

Q: Is PMHS trying to regulate my personal behavior? Could this policy evolve into regulating other things like my weight or the food that I eat?

A: PMHS is not trying to regulate personal behavior. PMHS will strongly encourage and support each of its staff to make healthy choices whether at work or not. However, it is important to remember that this policy is not just about staff; it is also about ensuring that our persons served are not subjected to toxins, allergens, or intrusive odors emanating from the staff members who care for them. PMHS is trying to encourage and create a healthy lifestyle for our employees and persons served.

Q: Will PMHS pay for smoking cessation aids like nicotine replacement therapy, including gum and patches?

A: Yes. PMHS Health Plan members are eligible to receive a reimbursement of the copayment they paid for smoking cessation medications once they have:

- Completed the *MyHealth Ready to Quit™* 6-week program
- Completed a 90-day *MyHealth Ready to Quit™* follow-up session

For more information, please contact 1-800-807-0751.

If your insurance does not cover this, PMHS will make them available to you if you participate in cessation counseling.

Q: If I live, commute, and/or otherwise interact with a smoker, what can I do to minimize the smell of smoke that lingers on me?

A: Freshening yourself and/or changing clothes may mitigate the smell of smoke that lingers on you. *LifeSolutions* is available to further brainstorm options and even role play how and what you might say to smokers with whom you live or carpool. For more information, contact *LifeSolutions* at 1-800-647-3327 or visit

<http://infonet2.PMHS.com/Health/EAP/Pages/default.aspx>.

Q: Why are e-cigarettes included in this policy when there is no smell of smoke, and they are an aid to stop smoking?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not tested the safety or effectiveness of e-cigarettes as an aid to quit smoking. Therefore, e-cigarettes are not approved under the PMHS policy; however, the use of all FDA-approved medications for the treatment of tobacco dependence are permitted under the policy. These include all nicotine replacement therapies (the patch, gum, lozenge, nasal spray, and oral inhaler), as well as FDA-approved non-nicotine pills.

Q. How will this policy be enforced for employees who work off-site?

The Clean Air/Smoke and Tobacco-Free Campus Policy is applied to all staff regardless of their PMHS work location. The work location includes any location where a staff member or someone acting on behalf of PMHS is providing services, such as on campus, in the community, within a patient's home, etc. Nonetheless, staff working from home have the same access to tobacco cessation resources as those who work at a PMHS work location.