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## **HOUSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY IMPLEMENTS SMOKE-FREE POLICY AT ITS 25 PROPERTIES THROUGHOUT HOUSTON**

**HOUSTON**—In an effort to protect non-smokers, especially children, from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, the Houston Housing Authority has implemented a smoke-free policy at its 25 public housing and tax credit properties throughout the city. Effective January 1, 2014, smoking is not allowed inside resident units, common areas, offices and 25 feet from all main entryways. Smoking is only allowed in designated areas. Houston joins other major cities across the nation, including Seattle, Boston, San Antonio, and Detroit, among others, that have recognized the dangers of secondhand smoke and its impact on the health of children, seniors, and others at risk for chronic health conditions.

“I congratulate the Houston Housing Authority for stepping up to protect the residents, visitors, and employees of its 25 public housing and tax credit properties,” said Mayor Annise Parker. “By eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke in all of its properties, HHA is providing a healthy living environment for the 5,500 families that live in housing authority properties. This has the potential to touch thousands of lives now and in the future.”

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) strongly encourages all housing authorities to implement a smoke-free policy at their properties. HUD cites the adverse health effects associated with smoking and secondhand smoke as the reason to adopt a smoke-free policy. Nationwide, more than 250 public housing authorities have gone smoke-free. In 2013, the Houston Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approved a smoke-free policy at each of HHA’s 25 public housing and tax credit properties.

“As one of the largest housing authorities in the country, we believe that providing a smoke-free environment for our residents is a major step in improving the health and well-being of our residents and will help HHA fulfill its mission of providing safe, quality housing,” said Houston Housing Authority President & CEO Tory Gunsolley. “The smoke-free policy is not an attack on smokers but rather an effort to protect non-smokers including children, elderly, disabled and people with chronic and respiratory illnesses. Also, we want to protect our employees such as the managers and maintenance staff who have to regularly go inside the units and may encounter first, second and third hand smoke.”

The Housing Authority's smoke-free policy promotes the [City of Houston's Community Transformation Initiative](#). The city's Health and Human Services Department also encourages housing communities to adopt a smoke-free policy.

"Tobacco-free living is a priority for Houston Health and Human Services and we are proud to partner with the Houston Housing Authority as they lead the way in transformative initiatives to improve the health of Houstonians," said Director of the Department of Health and Human Services Stephen Williams. "Our Community Transformation Initiative focuses on improving health and decreasing chronic diseases through the promotion of policies and systems changes. Ultimately, the goal is to make the easy choice, the healthy choice."

**ABOUT HHA:**

The Houston Housing Authority provides affordable homes and services to more than 60,000 low-income Houstonians, including over 17,000 families housed through the Housing Choice Voucher Program and another 5,500 living in 25 public housing and tax credit developments around the city. HHA also administers the nation's third largest voucher program exclusively serving homeless veterans. More information about the Houston Housing Authority can be found at [www.housingforhouston.com](http://www.housingforhouston.com).

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