



JEFFERSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1400 SIXTH AVENUE, SOUTH • P.O. BOX 2648 • BIRMINGHAM, AL 35202-2648 • 205.933.9110 • WWW.JCDH.ORG

Position Statement On Tobacco Usage

Recognizing the high cost of tobacco use, both in loss of life and health and in medical expense, the Jefferson County Department of Health has been and continues to be adamantly opposed to use of tobacco products in any form.

In 1999 more than 7,000 deaths in Alabama were attributable to smoking¹ and in 1998 smoking-related illnesses cost our state over \$1 billion in direct medical expenditures.¹

Tobacco use is a modifiable risk factor for ischemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive lung disease² and several forms of cancer, in addition to being the number one cause of lung cancer. Approximately 87% of cases of lung cancer and 30% of deaths from all forms of cancer are attributable to smoking.³ Alabama ranks tenth in cancer death by state.⁴ Maternal smoking during pregnancy is associated with short gestation and low birthweight, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and infant and childhood respiratory conditions.⁵ In 2001 infants born to smoking mothers had two and a half times the incidence of low birthweight deliveries compared to non-smoking mothers (7.1% vs. 2.7%).

We must break the cycle of addiction to tobacco, which begins with our young people. Children and teenagers constitute 90% of all new smokers in the United States.⁶ One third of new smokers will eventually die of tobacco-related diseases.⁶ According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, 15.1% of students in grades 6 through 8 currently use some form of tobacco.¹ In Alabama the percentage in this age group is 26.5%.¹ This suggests that tobacco use in Alabama may begin at an earlier age than in the United States as a whole and enforcement of current laws are ineffective in curbing this trend. The enactment and strict enforcement of youth access laws is critical to the protection of our youth.

Non-smokers exposed to environmental (secondhand) tobacco smoke at work or through living with a smoker have a 20% increased risk of developing lung cancer compared to those without exposure.⁷ The risk increases with greater levels of exposure.⁷ The Department encourages the passing of local and statewide laws to limit exposure of our citizens to environmental tobacco smoke.

These compelling figures demonstrate the dramatic costs to the people of Alabama and the Nation due to the use of tobacco products. The Jefferson County Department of Health, in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Public Health, encourages the elimination of tobacco use to prevent its devastating effects on the health of our citizens.

For more information call 930-1480 or visit www.jcdh.org

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Tobacco Information and Prevention Source; Alabama Highlights; (http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/statehi/html_2002/alabama.htm).

2 American Cancer Society; Cancer Facts & Figures 2003; Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society; 2003.

3 American Lung Association; Facts About Lung Cancer; (<http://www.lungusa.org/diseases/luncanc.html>).

4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; The Burden of Heart Disease, Stroke, Cancer, and Diabetes in the United States: Lung Cancer; (http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/burdenbook2002/02_lungcancer.htm).

5 Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; (<http://www.tobaccofreekids.com/research/factsheets>).

6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Morbidity & Economic Costs (SAMMEC); (<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/sammec>).

7 Zhong L, Goldberg MS, Parent ME, Hanley JA; Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and the risk of lung cancer: a meta-analysis; 2000; Lung Cancer; 27(1):3-18.

Adam Robertson, M.D.

Chairman, Jefferson County Board of Health

March 28, 2003

Date

Michael E. Fleener, M.D.

Health Officer

March 28, 2003

Date