What does “campus-wide tobacco-free” mean?
Smoking or tobacco use of any kind will not be permitted on any property owned or leased by Mercy Regional Health Center. Visitors or guests that would like to smoke or use other tobacco products will need to leave the campus, which is defined as:

> At the College Avenue Campus, crossing to the east side of College Avenue, the north side of Kimball Avenue, the south side of Vaughn Drive. It is not acceptable to cross the property line that borders the south and west sides of the parking lots onto residential properties.

> At the Sunset Avenue Campus, crossing to the other side of the driveway bordering the west side of the main building and EMS building, crossing to the north side of Claflin Road, crossing to the east side of Sunset Avenue, crossing to the south side of Platt Street. We should strongly encourage people affiliated with Mercy Regional Health Center wishing to smoke to NOT do so on the property of Pawnee Mental Health Services.

> At the West-Side Campus, including Occupational Health, Rehab Services, the Fitness Center, and Mercy Imaging, LLC, crossing to the far west side of the parking lot in the front of the building, and to the far east side of the driveway/parking area in the back of the building (primarily for employees). In no event should smoking occur within thirty (30) feet of entrances to Mercy departments.

> At the East-side Campus, including Rehab Services and the Fitness Center, crossing to the general parking area to the east of the building, or on the sidewalk south or east of the Mercy facility. In no event should smoking occur within thirty (30) feet of the entrance(s) to Mercy Departments.

For additional clarification regarding CAC and SAC, we do have the right to govern behaviors or actions “from curb to curb”, so it is well within our prerogatives to direct persons to cross the street to use tobacco products. While that is the “technical” definition of our campuses, we still need to be appropriate in how we communicate that to patients, guests, or visitors.

Why is tobacco use being targeted versus other health risks?
Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death, as well as preventable disease, in the United States. There has been a steady transition for the last twenty years to limit areas where smoking is allowed, particularly in hospitals, and our Board of Directors and Medical Staff have determined that now is the time for MRHC to take this next step. More details about the “facts and figures” that support our decision are available on the MRCH website, or from the Mission Services or Human Resources departments.
How will this policy be enforced?

For any contact between an MRHC employee and a person found to be in violation of the Tobacco-Free Environment policy, the first response should always be one of using courtesy and diplomacy to inform and educate the person about our campus-wide ban on tobacco use. Printed cards or brochures will be available to help you share this message, and over time employees will develop a greater confidence about what communications work well. For the specific groups that might be encountered in violation of the policy, here is additional guidance and suggested language to use:

For Patients: For non-emergency patients, information about alternatives to tobacco use will be available at physician’s offices and should be considered prior to arrival at Mercy. For emergency patients or others who find themselves here and having difficulty dealing with the cessation of regular tobacco use, there are specific order sets that a physician can use to provide nicotine patches. Language you might use in certain situations with patients is:

1. “I see that you have cigarettes/lighter/smokeless tobacco on the bedside table, and it's important to me that you know about our policy regarding tobacco use. As part of our commitment to a clean and healthy environment, as of January 1st we do not permit tobacco use anywhere on our campus, both inside and outside our buildings. May I contact your physician to have him/her discuss nicotine patches or other alternatives for you while you’re here with us?”

2. “Mr/Mrs __________, it appears from the odor around the restroom that perhaps you or someone else has smoked a cigarette here in your room. As of January 1st, Mercy has a policy that doesn’t permit smoking or any form of tobacco use in our buildings or on our campus. If it will be difficult for you to comply with this policy, may I suggest we contact your physician to have him/her discuss nicotine patches or other alternatives for you while you’re here with us?”

For Employees: Employees, including contract laborers or contract service providers, will be subject to disciplinary action as defined in the MRHC Disciplinary Action policy or the appropriate sections of the contract under which services are being provided. If an employee is discovered to be using tobacco in violation of the policy, that incident should be immediately reported to the employee’s department director.

1. “As a coworker, I would expect you to be familiar with our new Tobacco-Free Environment policy. If you’re not, I need to let you know that it is a policy violation to smoke or use tobacco products anywhere on the campus. For the benefit of our patients, physicians, and coworkers, please follow the policy; it’s really for the good of all of us.” Contact should subsequently be made with the employee’s department director, informing him/her of the specifics of the violation.

2. “As employees, we set the example for patients, visitors, and others. By not complying with the Tobacco-Free Environment policy you are potentially subject to discipline, and also sending a message to others that you may not support our mission and values. It is very clear from the policy that tobacco use should not occur on our campus, so please try to honor that and not smoke here.” Contact should subsequently be made with the employee’s department director, informing him/her of the specifics of the violation.
3. In the most extreme situations of arguing or not complying with requests to move off-campus to use tobacco, you will need to exercise judgment and make a decision to invoke the “Code 52” policy (this will result in additional assistance being provided by other available staff and the Riley County Police being contacted). This should only be used in the most extreme of circumstances when things have escalated to the point where there is an imminent potential of harm to yourself or others.

Overall, it is important to realize that your chance of success in addressing the issue at the first level is directly related to the approach you use and the time you invest in that communication with the guest/visitor. A brief, perfunctory “You can’t smoke here!” will be more likely to result in an argumentative or combative type response than a communication in which you take time to identify with the smoker and “where they’re at”, and communicate with them about how to best deal with his/her stress while still honoring our policy. This will take more of your time, but will almost invariably result in a better outcome (for you and the guest/visitor). It is also important to note that you can, and should, be polite and professional while still conveying the ultimate message that our Board and Medical Staff have directed that we will have a cleaner, healthier environment, and that compliance with the Tobacco-Free policy is required on our campuses.

**What if this policy results in smokers using restrooms, stairwells and/or their cars as places to smoke?**

As noted above, smoking inside of our facilities is a violation of Kansas state law, and must be dealt with more directly, with the message clearly stating that a person could be cited by police for smoking anywhere in a building including stairwells or restrooms. It would be best to also share that the smell of smoke is a trigger for patients with respiratory health problems, as well as those trying to quit or remain smoke-free while they are here. The suggested language and courteous approach described above should be used when communicating with persons found smoking stairwells or restrooms.

With respect to someone observed smoking in his/her automobile, it is probably best not to approach the vehicle unless it is someone you know. Once the person has exited the vehicle, you should approach them and use the suggested language provided above to educate them about our policy and that an option for them (non-employees) to consider is to drive his/her vehicle off-campus is they would like to smoke.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:**

As front-line employees who are likely to encounter persons who are not following the Tobacco-Free Environment policy you have a unique responsibility, and opportunity, to help us make the transition to a healthier environment. In each of those encounters, please remember to keep our Mission, Values, and Guiding Principles in mind as you work to help others understand and comply with our policy. Your efforts are appreciated and your continued emphasis on improving Mercy Regional Health Center as a place to receive care in a healthy environment is commended. THANK YOU!
3. “While you may not personally agree with our new Tobacco-Free Environment policy, it is still a policy that employees must follow, just like other HR or Administrative policies for attendance, drug-free workplace, or dress code. If you want to suggest changes or get clarification, please contact HR or Mission Services; in the meantime, please follow the policy.” Contact should subsequently be made with the employee’s department director, informing him/her of the specifics of the violation.

For Physicians: Any instance of a member of the MRHC medical staff found to be violating the policy should be reported to the Chief Medical Officer (Dr. Philipp at extension 2826) or to the President of the Medical Staff (via the Medical Staff Office, extension 4276).

1. “Dr. ________, I need to remind you of the new Tobacco-Free Environment policy that went into effect January 1st. While this is a difficult, and significant, change for all of us, we’d really appreciate your cooperation with the policy. If you disagree with the policy, it would be best to discuss that with the medical staff leadership or Dr. Philipp, but in the meantime I’d request that you please follow the policy and not smoke on the campus.” Contact should subsequently be made with Dr. Philipp or the President of the medical staff to informing him/her of the specifics of the violation.

For Family Members, Visitors, or Others: This will be the most challenging group to deal with in that there is not a clear and immediate follow-up process to refer them to, nor is there an immediate and known consequence for non-compliance. (NOTE: The exception would be any instance of smoking inside the building, including the courtyards or healing gardens, which is a violation of state law.) Given those circumstances, the recommended approach will always need to be one of courtesy and tact, with an emphasis on encouraging the guest/visitor to understand our policy and how they can comply with it for the time he/she is here at Mercy. These circumstances are where the printed cards/brochures will best be used, but only in conjunction with a professional, cordial communication that makes clear the importance we place on having a clean, healthy environment for everyone at MRHC.

1. While approaching a visitor and handing him/her a card, politely state “I imagine that you are having a tough time with a friend or family member in the hospital, and I want to respect your need to deal with that stress. However, I also want to make sure you’re aware of our Tobacco-Free Environment policy, and that use of tobacco products is not allowed on our campus. If you would finish this cigarette as quickly as possible, I can show you where there are areas to go off campus to smoke. We also have information in the hospital or on our web-site about nicotine gum or patches that might be helpful for you in the short term while you need to be here at Mercy with your family member or friend.”

2. In the event of a second conversation with the same person, or if the response from the guest/visitor is non-compliant or argumentative, the best response will be to obtain assistance from a member of management, a house supervisor, or other person of authority. The communication from that person should be of the same conciliatory, educational nature, and to the extent that it is not intimidating to the guest/visitor, having both you and the second person communicate the message might make a stronger point. Keep in mind that the goal in this type of situation is not to demand compliance at the immediate moment, but to clarify our expectations about future compliance and how the guest/visitor can best accomplish that end.