

NEWS RELEASE

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration:
Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

VA NEBRASKA-WESTERN IOWA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
FACILITIES, CAMPUSES TO GO SMOKE-FREE
BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2019

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OMAHA, Nebraska – As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs commitment to a smoke-free health care environment for Veterans and their families, the facilities and campuses of the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System will become smoke-free, beginning Oct. 1.

The change is in alignment with recent VA directives for all VHA facilities to become smoke-free by the first of October, ensuring that VA health care facilities will guarantee a fully smoke-free environment for Veterans.

The directive affects Veterans, their families and caregivers, visitors, vendors, contractors and all VA employees.

“This policy change is consistent with our mission to promote a healthy environment for patients, visitors and employees at our facilities as an important element in improving our health care system, said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie in an Aug. 21 news release. “It will reduce the harmful effects of smoking, including exposure to second and third-hand smoke, as well as increase safety and reduce fire hazards caused by smoking.”

B. Don Burman, director of the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, said VA NWIHCS fully supports the directive and has already been working with Veterans and employees in preparation for the implementation of the smoke-free policy.

“As the nation’s leader in Veteran health care, it is incumbent upon the VA to do everything within our power to ensure that we provide outstanding health care for our Veterans while also working with them to promote healthy lifestyle choices,” Burman said. “Studies have shown that the effects associated with smoking are a major risk factor to a Veteran’s health. Although we know that for some, kicking the smoking habit is extremely difficult, by becoming smoke-free and assisting our Veterans in stopping smoking, we will be able to get at one of the top issues affecting Veterans health.”

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System operates facilities in Omaha, Bellevue, Lincoln, Grand Island, North Platte, Norfolk, Holdrege and Shenandoah, Iowa. The smoke-free policy applies to cigarettes, cigars, pipes and any other combustion of tobacco and non-Federal Drug Administration approved electronic nicotine delivery system, including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System is currently offering Veterans smoking cessation services. For more information, visit the VA NWIHCS website at www.nebraska.va.gov.