



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Mental Health is Going Completely Tobacco Free**

*Hagatna, June 2, 2006-* Everyone entering the Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse (DMHSA) and its community facilities will now be able to breathe cleaner air. On July 1, 2006, the Department will be a tobacco-free facility. An official tobacco-free policy is being implemented to provide a healthy, comfortable and productive work environment for the department staff, consumers and visitors.

The policy is being announced a month in advance, so smokers and other tobacco users can better transition to the policy's restrictions and a tobacco free environment. Employees and consumers who smoke or use tobacco can take the opportunity to quit by participating in the cessation programs offered by the department.

The policy prohibits tobacco use, including smoking and chewing tobacco, within mental health facilities, common work areas, including satellite DMHSA facilities and contracted service sites in the community. It also prohibits tobacco use in DMHSA vehicles and while in personal vehicles when transporting persons or equipment on DMHSA-related business. All department social activities, such as parties, picnics, retreats, field visits, etc., will also be tobacco-free.

Studies have confirmed that tobacco use is dangerous and that cigarette smoke is a major contributor to indoor air pollution. Tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke are two of the largest preventable causes of premature death today.

Guam has the highest rate of smoking among all US States and territories. The top three causes of death on Guam are heart disease, cancer, and stroke, which are all directly related to smoking.

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A significant amount of secondhand smoke exposure occurs in workplaces that permit smoking. Employees who work in smoke-filled offices suffer a 25-50% higher risk of heart attack and higher rates of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer and other health related consequences.

In addition, workplaces that permit smoking result in higher worker absenteeism due to respiratory disease, lower productivity, higher cleaning and maintenance costs, increased health insurance rates, and increase liability claims for disease related to exposure to secondhand smoke.

For more about DMHSA's Tobacco Free Policy, contact the Prevention and Training Branch at (671) 477-9079 thru 83 or check-out [www.healthychoicesguam.org](http://www.healthychoicesguam.org) or [www.peaceguam.org](http://www.peaceguam.org)

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