



555 Towner St., Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Phone: (734) 544-6700

<http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 24, 2012

Contact: DeBorah Borden Service Coordinator, Tobacco Use Prevention
bordend@ewashtenaw.org
(734) 544-6874

YPSILANTI HOUSING COMMISSION ADOPTS SMOKE-FREE HOUSING POLICY *First in Washtenaw County to Voluntarily Protect Residents from Secondhand Smoke*

YPSILANTI, Mich., February 24, 2012 – In January, the Ypsilanti Housing Commission Board voted to adopt a smoke-free policy for all of its buildings. Smoking will no longer be permitted inside any public housing operated by the Commission, which will protect non-smoking tenants from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke exposure. The policy will become effective on or before May 1, 2012. Ypsilanti is the first public housing authority in Washtenaw County to adopt a smoke-free housing policy.

“This policy is about protecting our residents from the dangers of secondhand smoke. It does not prohibit an individual from smoking, it just requires him or her to smoke outside where others are not harmed by the secondhand smoke,” says Walter Norris, Executive Director of the Ypsilanti Housing Commission. “Secondhand smoke travels between units, and the only way to protect people from smoke exposure is to prohibit smoking inside the buildings,” he continued. The approved policy includes a “grandfather” clause allowing current residents who are smokers to continue to do so for as long as they live in their unit.

In 2010, the Michigan Department of Community Health received funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to address the issue of smoke-free housing. Washtenaw County is one of several Michigan counties participating in the Michigan Smoke Free Apartment Initiative and assisting property owners in voluntarily adopting smoke-free policies. In 2010 and 2011, Washtenaw County Public Health facilitated information sessions educating the public and property managers about the smoke-free housing initiative. Topics included the benefits of a smoke-free housing policy, property owners’ right to implement such a policy and the legal and technical assistance available.

“We are thrilled to see the Ypsilanti Housing Commission adopt a smoke-free housing policy and to recognize that a unit filled with tobacco smoke is not healthy or safe for the individuals living there,” says DeBorah Borden, the Tobacco Use Prevention Coordinator for Public Health.

Smoke-free policies protect non-smoking tenants from toxins associated with secondhand smoke and provide cost savings for property owners. Smoking in buildings can cost a property owner two to seven times more¹ per unit at turnover because of damage to carpets, walls and furniture.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has strongly encouraged all funded and subsidized properties to pass smoke-free policies. The U.S. Surgeon General’s report on the health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke concludes that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and the only way to fully protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke is to eliminate smoking in indoor places.

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease or injury in our community. Visit us online at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>.

The Michigan Smoke Free Apartment Initiative (<http://www.mismokefreeapartment.org/>) is a partnership of local health departments, the Tobacco Section of the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Smoke Free Environments Law Project (<http://www.tcsg.org/sfelp/home.htm>).

A summary of the Surgeon General’s 2006 report is available at:
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/report/executivesummary.pdf>

###

¹ “Analysis of unit renovation costs for non-smokers vs smokers” (2009). Available at:
<http://www.smokefreehousinginfo.com/pages/Public&AffordableHousing.index.html>.