



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **All licensed child care homes in St. Louis County to go smoke-free 24/7**

Licensed family child care homes in St. Louis County will soon be completely smoke free. A new rule, aimed at protecting children from exposure to harmful smoke, goes into effect January 1, 2015, and requires licensed child care providers to keep their home smoke free 24 hours a day, seven days a week, regardless of whether children are present.

This change – which is not really a change for most child care providers – is the latest effort to protect children from tobacco’s harm, including lingering smoke. It’s well documented that second hand smoke is a known cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, asthma attacks and ear infections, and puts children at greater risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and lung cancer. Newer national studies have found that “third hand smoke” – the remnants of the toxic chemicals from smoking cigarettes – is left on countertops, floors, upholstery, carpets, clothing, fabrics and toys. When infants and children play on these surfaces or touch these items and then put their fingers in their mouths, they are exposed to these harmful particles.

St. Louis County has a proud history of pushing for cleaner air quality for children to protect their health and development. In 1998, St. Louis County was the first county in Minnesota to adopt the policy of smoke free foster care homes for children. Since 2007, following statewide “Freedom to Breathe” legislation, all child care centers have been required to be smoke free facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, home-based family child care was only required to be smoke-free while the children were present. Providers were allowed to smoke in their daycare homes when children aren’t present if they provide verbal and written notification to parents or guardians.

“The vast majority of our licensed child care homes already are smoke free, and we’re very pleased to see that,” said St. Louis County Commissioner Patrick Boyle. “Many parents demand a smoke-free environment for their children, and so daycare homes have responded accordingly. This new licensing requirement is to ensure that all children in licensed child care homes receive that same benefit.”

“Every child deserves to be protected from the harmful effects of second and third hand smoke,” said Jill Doberstein, Program Manager of Tobacco Prevention & Control for the American Lung Association in Minnesota. “Cancer-causing compounds emitted from tobacco penetrate furniture, toys and other objects, which children often touch with their mouths.”

A survey of licensed in-home child care providers in Duluth, conducted two years ago on behalf of the American Lung Association, found that 106 out of 107 respondents did not allow smoking in their home at any time. In that same survey, more than 92 percent of respondents favored a 24/7 smoking ban.

“I really don’t see this new rule as an imposition,” said April Hall, who runs Aunty’s Child Care from her West Duluth home. “Yes, this rule affects my home, as well as my business, but I got into this line of work because I love children, and so I want what’s best for them.”

St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services is notifying providers of all licensed family child care homes this week about the coming change, and is providing materials to help these small business owners promote their new, safer conditions for children.

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