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New Oklahoma Law Eliminates Tobacco Use on School Grounds or at Activities

As of August 20, 2015 all Oklahoma public and private schools are to be tobacco-free. The new law will also prohibit anyone from using tobacco in school vehicles and at any school sponsored or school sanctioned event or activity, including sporting events. House Bill 1685 also known as the 24/7 Tobacco-Free Schools Act, provides around the clock protection from the dangers of tobacco use.

“Prior to this law, we had voluntary participation from a majority of schools in our state. Now, we can insure that all of our state’s children are protected 24 hours a day, seven days a week from exposure to cigarettes and other tobacco products,” said Governor Mary Fallin.

Adolescent tobacco users are at increased risk for memory loss, depression, cardiac irregularities, and long-term dependence than adults. A tobacco-free environment is an important measure to protect the health of Oklahoma’s youth.

Each year 17,900 youth in Oklahoma try smoking for the first time and 4,200 youth under the age of 18 start smoking daily. The new law aims to help reduce those numbers by limiting exposure to tobacco.

“Our children learn behaviors by watching those around them,” said Dr. Terry Cline, Cabinet Secretary of Health and Human Services and Oklahoma State Department of Health Commissioner. “The 24/7 Tobacco-Free Schools Act will help prevent Oklahoma’s youth from becoming tobacco’s next victims.”

Although e-cigarettes and vapor products are not covered in the new law, schools are encouraged to include those products in their tobacco-free policies. Already, 246 school districts have implemented a ban on e-cigarettes and vapor products, which can mimic conventional cigarettes. Vapor products may also contain nicotine that negatively impacts adolescent brain development.

For more information on the 24/7 Tobacco-Free Schools Act, visit the [24/7 Tobacco-Free Schools](http://www.okhelpline.com/) webpage. For information on quitting tobacco, call the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or register online at <http://www.okhelpline.com/>.

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