



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **SCHENECTADY MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY ANNOUNCES SMOKE-FREE POLICY FOR SENIOR DEVELOPMENTS**

*Siena Research Institute survey shows that oldest public housing authority in New York is the largest in Capital Region to join growing national trend*

**(Schenectady, NY) October 1, 2012** – The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority (SMHA) announced today that its senior developments will be going smoke-free on April 1, 2013. The policy will require residents, guests and visitors to refrain from smoking in individual units, in common areas and on grounds, except in designated outdoor smoking areas. As determined by a recent Siena Research Institute (SRI) survey of public housing authorities in New York State, SMHA joins at least 10 other federally funded housing authorities in New York State that have a no-smoking policy in some or all of their units.

The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority is one of the first and the largest in the Capital Region to adopt a smoke-free policy. The policy will apply to all 412 units in its three downtown developments - Schonowee Village, Lincoln Heights and Ten Eyck Apartments which house seniors and the disabled.

“We’re eager to provide a healthier, safer home environment for our senior and disabled residents,” stated Richard Homenick, executive director of the Housing Authority. “It’s one way that we can improve their quality of life and ability to live independently.”

More than 230 housing authorities in 27 states have smoke-free policies; 214 of those policies have been adopted since January 2005.<sup>1</sup> In the Capital Region, Gloversville and Hoosick Falls housing authorities are among those that have adopted no-smoking policies in New York.

According to the SRI survey, of the public housing authorities with smoke-free policies, reducing health risks for tenants and for staff were the most significant factors cited for policy implementation. Lessening complaints from tenants and decreasing fire hazards followed as the next most important factors. Additionally, 92% of respondents said that they are completely (57%) or somewhat (35%) satisfied with implementation of their smoke-free policy.

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The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) strongly encourages public housing authorities to implement non-smoking policies in some or all of their public housing units to protect against secondhand smoke as well as to reduce the risk of fire and to save on turnover costs.<sup>2</sup> Exposure to secondhand smoke increases a nonsmoker's risk of developing heart disease and lung cancer and is a known trigger for asthma. The elderly and people with chronic illnesses are especially vulnerable to the adverse effects of secondhand smoke. And according to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers, eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect nonsmokers from the health risks associated with exposure to secondhand smoke.<sup>3</sup>

“One of the chief complaints I hear from other tenants is tobacco smoke from neighbors seeping into their apartment, making it difficult to breathe and enjoy clean air in their own home,” said Joan Johnson, resident of Ten Eyck Apartments for 12 years, and member of the SMHA Board of Commissioners. “I’m thrilled that the Authority is taking this step to improve our health.” Edward Kosiur, Chairman of the SMHA Board of Commissioners, echoes this sentiment and adds that “This is good policy that will have an immediate positive impact on the wellbeing of the people we serve.”

To assist residents who smoke and wish to quit, cessation courses will be provided onsite free of charge in November and December through the Seton Health Center for Smoking Cessation's Butt Stops Here program. SMHA staff and the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition, which has been providing technical assistance to the housing authority, will be available at resident meetings to be held in October to provide an opportunity to ask questions about the policy.

“I commend the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority for doing right by its residents,” said City of Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy. “For almost a decade now, New Yorkers have been able to enjoy working in smoke-free spaces. It’s only right that these residents can now breathe tobacco-free air in their own homes.”

#### *About the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority*

*Established on February 6, 1934, the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority is the first public housing authority in New York State. Since the first tenants occupied Schonowee Village in 1938, the Authority has grown to encompass seven conventional housing developments serving a total of 1,018 low-income families. The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program serves the housing needs of 1,387 households throughout the City of Schenectady.*

#### *About the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition*

*The Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition is a community partnership of organizations and individuals working to decrease the impact of tobacco on our community, by promoting smoking cessation, preventing youth initiation and promoting smoke-free environments. Information on the Coalition can be obtained by going to [www.SmokeFreeCapital.org](http://www.SmokeFreeCapital.org).*

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1 Smoke-Free Environments Law Project, Housing Authorities/Commissions which have adopted smoke-free policies, available at <http://www.tcsg.org/sfelp/SFHousingAuthorities.pdf>

2 U.S. Dep't of Housing & Urban Dev., Non-Smoking Policies in Public Housing, Notice: PIH-2009-21 (HA) (July 17, 2009), available at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/publications/notices/09/pih2009-21.pdf>

3 Am. Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc., Environmental Tobacco Smoke Position Document, at 1 (2008), available at [http://www.ashrae.org/docLib?20090120\\_POS\\_ETS.pdf](http://www.ashrae.org/docLib?20090120_POS_ETS.pdf)