



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Audrey Eisenberg
(630) 207-6337

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services joins public housing residents to support smoke-free homes, calls for community involvement to reduce smoking rates in Chicago

Chicago, IL – U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius met with local officials and residents at Roosevelt Square, a mixed income housing development on Chicago's west side.

Sebelius affirmed a nationwide commitment to tobacco prevention policies and programs, and highlighted Chicago's award as one of 44 communities selected to participate in the nationwide Communities Putting Prevention to Work initiative.

"What the City of Chicago and Respiratory Health Association are doing to make Chicago public housing a healthier place to live and raise families is so important," said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

"Communities Putting Prevention to Work grants are designed to help local leaders promote local policies that work. Over 400,000 Americans die from smoking each year. We need to help prevent kids from starting to smoke and support programs like this one on the local level that make the places where they live and go to school smoke-free. I commend this terrific example of communities coming together for the greater public good. It is an inspiring model for how we can all work together to make America healthier."

Sebelius also commended Chicago Housing Authority CEO Lewis Jordan and residents, represented by Commissioner Deverra Beverly, on their leadership toward smoke-free public housing. CHA plans to pilot smoke-free policies in a few selected neighborhoods under the Chicago Tobacco Prevention Project.

Under the proposed plan, residents will be trained to become smoking cessation counselors and smoke-free advocates in their own neighborhoods. Current residents will be "grandfathered in" and new residents will have the option of selecting a smoke-free residence as part of their lease agreement.

"Community partners are essential to the success of this initiative," said Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago President and CEO Joel Africk. "Our partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority is just one example of meaningful involvement by leaders and residents that will lead to long-lasting change and improved public health."

Led by Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago and the Chicago Department of Public Health, the Chicago Tobacco Prevention Project seeks to decrease smoking rates, reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and increase smoke-free environments.

For more information on the project, visit www.lungchicago.org/chicago-tobacco-prevention-project.

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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago has been a public health leader in local communities since 1906. Today, the association fights lung disease and promotes healthy lungs by supporting research, public policies and educational efforts on behalf of individuals and families affected by lung cancer, asthma, COPD and other lung diseases.