

May 19, 2008

Sarasota County adopts tobacco-free hiring policy

Beginning Monday, May 19, Sarasota County Government will implement a tobacco-free hiring policy for all new job applicants.

Under the new policy, all applicants for jobs with Sarasota County will be required to acknowledge during the application process that they have not used tobacco products for the preceding 12 months. Applicants who refuse to verify that they do not use tobacco products will be deemed ineligible for employment. In addition, applicants will be screened for tobacco use during the new-hire physical exam process. If the screening indicates the presence of nicotine above a specified amount, the applicant will be considered ineligible for employment.

This change in policy is substantiated by years of research regarding the negative effects of tobacco use on the personal health of individuals and employer organizations. For example, from 1997-2001, cigarette smoking was estimated to be responsible for \$167 billion in annual health-related economic losses in the United States. Due to higher insurance costs and the drain on productivity, many employers are now choosing not to hire tobacco users. Sarasota County has decided to adopt this tobacco-free policy to promote a healthier work force and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.