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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

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Alaska Psychiatric Institute goes smoke free

Mentally ill patients are dying 25 years earlier than the general population from illnesses linked to tobacco usage

(Anchorage, Alaska) — Beginning July 1 the entire Alaska Psychiatric Institute campus will prohibit smoking. This follows reports that morbidity and mortality rates for the mentally ill are high due to conditions such as cardiovascular disease and pulmonary infections. Tobacco usage can be linked to these disorders in many cases. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services supports the API campus in their quest to improve the health and well-being of our mentally ill residents.

“I am encouraged by the support to move to smoke-free campuses nationwide,” API Director Ron Adler said. “Many published reports encourage overall health as a treatment goal for the mentally ill. When obesity, hypertension and other illnesses are triggered by risk factors such as smoking, something must be done by the institutions providing the care.”

API patients will be offered a variety of smoking suppressants.

A report published by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Council states that while suicide and injury account for 30 to 40 percent of deaths in the mentally ill, 60 percent of schizophrenic patients die from illnesses that can be linked to tobacco usage. This report is based on relevant literature review; workgroups; meetings with medical directors, commissioners; research; and interviews with technical experts.

To read the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Council report, visit the Web at www.nasmhpd.org/publications.cfm#techpap and view “Technical Papers.” To learn more about API, visit the Web at www.hss.state.ak.us/dbh/API.

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