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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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We invite any media interested in interviewing our VA staff to learn more about care and services to contact our Public Affairs Officer at 989-497-2500, extension 13020 or e-mail carrie.seward@va.gov

Introducing Veterans Health Administration's Smoke-Free Policy, Effective October 1, 2019

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is implementing VHA Directive 1085 Smoke-Free Policy for patients, visitors, vendors, volunteers, and contractors at VA health care facilities consistent with our mission to promote a healthy environment as an important element of improving our health care system. This will impact all VA medical centers, including Aleda E. Lutz VAMC and Healthcare Annex in Saginaw, and the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Alpena, Bad Axe, Cadillac, Cheboygan (Mackinaw City), Clare, Gaylord, Grayling, Oscoda, and Traverse City. This policy change coincides with additional VHA efforts to help us become the provider of choice for Veterans. This new policy of no smoking at VA health care facilities will be effective on October 1, 2019.

There is currently overwhelming evidence that smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke creates significant medical risks, and a growing body of evidence that exposure to thirdhand smoke creates additional risks to safety and direct patient care. To fulfill our commitment to Veterans, we must be mindful of situations which are harmful to their health and the wellbeing of our patients, staff, and members of the public. We offer a number of smoking cessation classes and various treatment alternatives are available. We encourage Veterans and staff to participate in the resources available to ensure their success. Veterans may discuss these options with their VA provider or contact the Health Behavioral Coordinator at 989-497-2500, Extension 12454.

We are not alone in recognizing the importance of creating a smoke-free campus. As of 2014, 4,000 health care facilities and four national health care systems in the U.S. have implemented smoke-free grounds. Additionally, many Department of Defense (DoD) facilities, as well as some of our own VHA facilities, have already established a smoke-free campus.

We are collaborating with key stakeholders, including facility and Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) directors, to recertify and update policy consistent with our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our community. In the coming months, we will work with our experts and facility leaders to develop facility implementation plans

and resources to fully implement this policy on October 1, 2019.

The Aleda E. Lutz VAMC in Saginaw, Michigan operates an 81-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation Community Living Center, with an additional 8-bed acute medicine and telemetry wing. It provides care to over 36,700 Veterans in a 35-county geographic area, from mid-Michigan to the Mackinac Bridge. Veterans also receive care at one of our nine VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics located throughout Michigan. More information about this VA can be found at www.saginaw.va.gov.

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