

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott  
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:**

Tobacco Free Hernando  
Tresa Watson  
(352) 596-8000  
tresaw@cenaps.com

**Hernando County School Board Adopts 100% Tobacco-Free Policy**

Brooksville, FL – Hernando County is the newest school district to join a growing list of Florida public school systems adopting the 100% Tobacco Free School Policy. The Hernando County School Board formally adopted a policy that prohibits use of tobacco products on school properties at their regular meeting on June 23.

The Hernando County School District (HCSD) joins 31 school systems in the State of Florida that have adopted the policy which prohibits cigarette, e-cigarette, cigar, pipe smoking and smokeless tobacco use by students, faculty, staff and visitors. "School campuses provide an important setting for interventions that can empower children to make healthy decisions about tobacco use," Superintendent Lori Romano said. "Eliminating smoking and use of other tobacco products by students, teachers and visitors on all school campuses sends a consistent and constructive message that will help Hernando youth stay tobacco-free."

The Florida Dept. of Health – 2014 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey reports that 3 percent of Hernando County's middle school students and 13.3 percent of Hernando County's high school students smoke cigarettes, as compared to states averages of 2.3 and 7.5 percent respectively. With Florida's tobacco-use statistics for Hernando's youth reflecting higher annual increases than statewide trends, the Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida encourages continued collaboration with school systems to adopt the 100% Tobacco Free School Policy.

Hernando County is pleased to be part of the increasing number of 100% Tobacco Free schools in Florida. To achieve this goal, Tobacco Free Hernando staff has been working collaboratively with the HCSD to adopt the policy. The policy has been shown to be one of the most effective ways of reducing first-time use of tobacco products among youth in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Also, implementation of the policy is recognized as a best practice for tobacco control.

Tobacco Free Hernando, together with the Florida Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida program and local Students Working against Tobacco (SWAT) chapters, has been working to strengthen policies to restrict tobacco use on school properties and at school events with Hernando County's nine school-based SWAT Clubs and Tobacco Free Hernando.

Preventing tobacco use is key in the fight against tobacco, the leading cause of preventable death in the state. More than 18,900 kids (under 18)<sup>1</sup> in Florida become new cigarette smokers each year.

Current data suggests that 369,000 Florida children, now under the age of 18, will ultimately die prematurely from their own smoking or from secondhand smoke.<sup>2</sup>

For more information about tobacco free schools, please visit [tobaccofreeflorida.com/schools](http://tobaccofreeflorida.com/schools).

#### **ABOUT TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA**

DOH's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund.

Tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to use one of the state's three ways to quit. To learn about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit resources, visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com) or follow the campaign on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida](http://www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida) or Twitter at [www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla](http://www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla).

DOH works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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<sup>1</sup>Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Florida. Web. [http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts\\_issues/toll\\_us/florida](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/florida). Updated June 20 2013,

<sup>2</sup>Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2012