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Office of
Personnel Management

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MEMORANDUM FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORS

FROM:

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Subject:

HealthierFeds: Promoting Wellness Among Federal Employees
Tobacco Cessation, November 2005

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) supports and encourages agency authorized programs aimed at health promotion and disease prevention, including tobacco cessation programs. OPM's *Guidance on Establishing Programs to Help Employees Stop Using Tobacco* (<http://www.opm.gov/ehs/smokgud3.asp>) has recently been updated in collaboration with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. AHRQ is the lead agency for the development and release of the Public Health Service clinical practice guideline: *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence* (<http://www.ahrq.gov/path/tobacco.htm>). Agencies can contribute to the goals of *Healthy People 2010*, the President's *HealthierUS* initiative, and OPM's *HealthierFeds* initiative by using such information to help meet the needs of their employee populations regarding tobacco cessation.

For the last decade, OPM has taken a strong stance in promoting the Federal worksite as an important place to help employees stop using tobacco. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, tobacco use is the most avoidable cause of death and illness in our nation; however, 45 million Americans continue to smoke, and many others use alternative forms of tobacco. Applying national statistics to the Federal population, it is estimated that approximately twenty-three percent (23%) of Federal employees still smoke. New pharmaceutical therapies have been introduced in the last few years helping more people to stop using tobacco. Currently, ninety-eight (98%) of the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) plans offer tobacco cessation benefits, some of which include these drug therapies. Agencies should continue to educate Federal employees about the benefits available to them through the FEHB plans.

The American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout® in November provides an excellent opportunity for tobacco cessation programs to be implemented or expanded, and for agencies to provide no- and low-cost educational resources, activities, and events supporting tobacco cessation programs. Information and other tools are available on several Federal websites, including OPM's *HealthierFeds* (<http://www.healthierfeds.gov>), AHRQ's Consumers and Patients link (<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/#smoking>), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Tobacco Information and Prevention Resource (<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco>). The National Cancer Institute hosts <http://www.smokefree.gov> as well as the National Quitline (800-QUITNOW), which provides direct access to free tobacco cessation counseling services over the phone.

By choosing to actively promote tobacco cessation, agencies can play a pivotal role in improving the health of our Federal family.

cc: Federal Employee Assistance Program Representatives