SmokeFreeColorado
Good health is good business

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Colorado Launches 24/7 Call Center and Web Site to Educate Business Owners and Residents About Smoke-Free Colorado

DENVER – To help residents and business owners understand the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act, the statewide smoke-free law, Colorado is launching an informational call center and a Web site. The free call center at 1-888-701-2006 will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week starting June 5. The Web site, www.smokefreeColorado.org, also will go live June 5.

Colorado's statewide smoke-free law, which goes into effect July 1, requires most indoor public areas including restaurants, bars and most workplaces to be smoke-free.

The call center, staffed by trained, qualified operators, is designed to handle a large number of calls in a very short period of time. The state anticipates significant interest from mid-June, two weeks before the law goes into effect, to a few weeks after the law is implemented at the beginning of July. Callers, after initially being identified as individuals or business owners, are offered the options of receiving automated, pre-recorded information on the most frequently asked questions or talking to a live operator to have their individual questions answered.

Callers can ask questions about the law and how it affects them, such as where smoking is permitted, how far away from building entrances they must be to smoke, penalties for violating the law and free quitting resources that are available statewide. Businesses may have questions about whether they're required to be smoke-free and will learn that, essentially, the only exemptions are casinos, cigar-tobacco bars, retail tobacco businesses, up to a quarter of hotel and motel rooms, limousines for hire and Denver International Airport's smoking lounge. They can also learn about the free educational materials and no-smoking signage available for businesses.

The Web site will provide comprehensive information for the general public; proprietors of bars, restaurants and other businesses; local health agencies; and community partners. Information on the new site will include:

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- an online service through which to order free educational materials and no-smoking signage to help business owners educate their customers and employees about the law;
- fact sheets, press releases and FAQs;
- a section for businesses with information about compliance, employee education and economic impact;
- information about smoking cessation and Colorado's Quitline and QuitNet counseling services;
- TV spots airing to educate Coloradoans about the new law; and
- text of the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act.

All Web site content will be available in both English and Spanish; in addition, an online fact sheet will be available in other languages to ensure all Coloradoans understand the new law.

Smoke-free laws are proving to be an effective way to improve public health by reducing people's exposure to secondhand smoke, which has been shown to be harmful to both adults and children and causes about 53,000 deaths per year in the United States. Colorado is the 13th state to enact a smoke-free law, creating healthier environments for people while they're in public indoor places. People living, working and visiting in Colorado will benefit from having access to healthier indoor environments wherever they go.

Most cities and states with smoke-free laws in restaurants and bars have seen an improvement in residents' health. For example, studies in Helena, Mont., and Pueblo, Colo., found significant drops in hospital admissions for heart attacks in the 18 months after enacting smoke-free ordinances.

In Colorado, tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death. Surveys of Colorado smokers have found that 85 percent of them want to quit. The Colorado Quitline, 800-639-QUIT, is a free telephone coaching service that supports smokers through the quitting process and offers up to eight free weeks of the patch. Telephone coaching with the patch shows a 40-42 percent success rate, versus only 3 percent for Colorado smokers quitting on their own.

Smoke-Free Colorado is a statewide coalition of health and community organizations including the American Heart Association, American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, GASP of Colorado (Group to Alleviate Smoking Pollution), Colorado Tobacco Education and Prevention Alliance and the State Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership. Together, Smoke-Free Colorado is working to educate the public about the state's smoke-free law that goes into effect July 1, 2006.

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