

Gallup-McKinley County Schools becomes 15th in New Mexico to go tobacco-free

Written by Staff Reports
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New policy goes into effect for 2021/2022 school year

MCKINLEY COUNTY — A new tobacco-free policy at Gallup McKinley County Schools is getting recognized by the New Mexico Department of Health Tobacco Use Prevention and Control program.

The GMCS Board of Education voted June 14 to adopt a comprehensive, tobacco-free school policy, joining 14 other school districts across the state in using 24/7 campaign guidelines.

David Tompkins, TUPAC Community Health Initiatives Manager said seeing Gallup McKinley County Schools adopt the 100 percent tobacco-free policy is a huge win for the campaign.

“Lives are on the other side of this work, and we are thankful for the district’s support in promoting a healthy learning environment for everyone,” Tompkins said.

This campaign will be protecting approximately 11,631 students and 1,819 staff members from the harms of tobacco while on campus property or at off-site school events, according to the NMDOH.

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The 24/7 campaign partners with school districts to help them update their tobacco policies to meet the comprehensive standard of the DOH, which is more stringent than the current required laws in the state of New Mexico.

By the 24/7 standard, the definition of tobacco products includes e-cigarettes and nicotine liquid containers, and the policy applies to students, staff, and visitors at all school property owned, leased, or rented by the district, as well as all school-sponsored activities whether on- or off-site.

The guidelines also require schools to provide cessation resources as well as progressive and supportive discipline measures to assist those struggling with addiction.

To help promote its new comprehensive policy, Gallup-McKinley County Schools will be receiving free resources from the 24/7 campaign, including the 24/7 Toolkit and bilingual tobacco-free signs for all school buildings and grounds for all 34 district schools. Other free resources include faculty training and bilingual pre-written announcements, staff memos and parent letters explaining the policy.

“Our students’ wellbeing is top priority, and we are pleased to join several other districts in Northwest New Mexico in adopting 24/7’s tobacco-free policy,” GMCS Superintendent Mike Hyatt said. “We look forward to making the 2021/2022 school year the best one yet, and an important step is making sure our campuses are tobacco-free.”

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