

**EMBARGOED UNTIL: 3:00 PM, CDT, SEPTEMBER 26, 2005 (MONDAY)**

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### **Moorhead residents very supportive of smoke-free workplace ordinance.**

Moorhead residents overwhelmingly favor the smoke-free workplace ordinance implemented last December according to a survey conducted by the North Dakota State Data Center in conjunction with Clay County Public Health. Nearly 82 percent of residents surveyed currently favor the smoke-free workplace ordinance. Prior to its implementation, 63 percent of residents said they favored the ordinance. When questioned about the restrictive nature of the ordinance, 58 percent of residents indicated they thought it was “just right” while 26 percent wanted it “more restrictive,” suggesting that the ordinance should be expanded to all workplaces. Results also show that the vast majority (85 percent) of adults in Moorhead feel that the city commission made good public policy by passing the ordinance. Moreover, 66 percent of adult residents believe that the new ordinance has improved work environments.

“The survey results are very important because they show that city commissioners were right in their decision to move forward on a very controversial ordinance that brought out lots of emotions,” said Dr. Richard Rathge, Director of the State Data Center. “There are a lot of misconceptions regarding how people will react to smoke-free policies and this study provides objective evidence that will help other policy makers who are struggling with similar ordinances,” said Rathge.

Perhaps one of the most sought after findings from the report indicates that the vast majority of residents did not change how often they frequented restaurants that do and do not serve alcohol. This issue was a major concern for those who opposed the ordinance. In fact, the results indicate that of the people who did change their behavior as a result of the ordinance, more have selected to visit restaurants more often rather than less often. In the case of non-alcohol serving restaurants, 74 percent said they visited them about the same amount of time while 19 percent increased their visits. More than two-thirds reported that eating at these restaurants since they went smoke-free was more enjoyable. Similar results were reported for alcohol serving restaurants. Of those in the survey who frequent bars/lounges (which do allow smoking), 14 percent reported going less often.

“The mission of Clay County Public Health is to assure optimal health of all Clay County residents through effective community planning, services, and partnerships,” adds Kathy McKay, Clay County Public Health administrator. “The Moorhead Smoke-Free Workplace ordinance was a big step towards improving the health of workers, but it does leave bar workers unprotected. Since this ordinance was passed, several communities in the state of Minnesota have passed ordinances that provide protection from secondhand smoke for all workers. We hope to see the City of Moorhead continue to be a leader in protecting workers, residents, and visitors from the dangers of secondhand smoke.”

The results are from a telephone survey of randomly selected households in Moorhead, Minnesota, conducted by the North Dakota State Data Center at North Dakota State University in June of 2005. Interviews with 360 adult household members were completed with a margin of error less than 5 percent.