

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 11, 2007

For information, contact:  
Taka Wiley; (404) 657-1385  
[tlwiley@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:tlwiley@dhr.state.ga.us)

## **LOCAL COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM ADOPTS TOBACCO FREE POLICY**

ATLANTA (GA) – Meriwether County Schools is the newest school district to join a growing list of Georgia educational systems that are adopting the 100% Tobacco Free School Policy. A total of 13 school systems in Georgia have adopted the policy which prohibits cigarette, cigar, pipe smoking and smokeless tobacco use by students, faculty, staff and visitors. The Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health reports that nine percent of Georgia’s middle school students and 19 percent of the state’s high school students smoke cigarettes. With tobacco use statistics for Georgia’s youth reflecting a national trend of rising rates, the Division of Public Health encourages continued collaborations with school systems to adopt the 100% Tobacco Free School Policy.

The 100% Tobacco Free Schools Policy forbids tobacco use in school buildings, on school grounds, in school buses or other vehicles used to transport students, and at off-campus school sponsored events 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The policy also utilizes components such as youth groups, surveys, signage and media campaigns to educate students about the health risks associated with cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. The development of a cessation plan for students and staff is also a critical component of the 100% Tobacco Free Schools Policy program.

“The addition of Meriwether County Schools illustrates the stance our educational system is taking against tobacco use,” said Dr. Stuart Brown, Director of the Division of Public Health. “We know that preventing tobacco use begins with educating middle and high school students about the dangers of smoking and using tobacco products. We are pleased to continue partnering with schools districts, like Meriwether County, to help decrease the health and economic burden of smoking among Georgia’s youth.”

-more-

Increasing the number of 100% Tobacco Free schools is a top priority with DHR's Tobacco Use Prevention efforts. To achieve this goal, staff with the Division of Public Health have been working collaboratively with local school systems and advocacy groups to adopt the policy. The policy has been shown to be one of the most effective ways of reducing the start of tobacco use among the nation's youth. Also, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), implementation of the policy is a best practice for tobacco control.

Within the last year, the following school systems have taken strides to promote the health of students by adopting and implementing the 100% Tobacco Free Schools Policy. These school systems include: Glynn County Schools, Worth County Schools, Liberty County Schools, Marietta City Schools, Muscogee County Schools, Hancock County Schools, Douglas County Schools, Charlton County Schools, McDuffie County Schools and Effingham County Schools.

For more information about the 100% Tobacco Free School Policy or tobacco use prevention, please visit online at <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/tobacco/index.asp> or call (404) 657-6611.