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News Release

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ODH Releases Smoke-Free Law Health, Economic Impact Reports

COLUMBUS –The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) released a collection of five reports today that analyzed the health, behavioral and economic impacts of the statewide smoking ban.

“These analyses show that Ohio’s coordinated public health efforts are having a positive impact on the health of our residents,” said ODH Director Ted Wymyslo, M.D. “It is important to note, however, that these studies only represent initial findings on the impact of the law as additional studies are currently underway.”

Two separate studies compared heart attack data for emergency room and urgent care visit complaints (pre-diagnosis) and hospital discharge data (post-diagnosis) respectively. When comparing emergency room visit data before and after the law, Ohio’s heart attack complaint rates declined by approximately 26 percent. The analysis of discharge data from Ohio hospitals also revealed a sharp decline in heart attack rates immediately following implementation of the law.

An analysis of the economic impact was also conducted using taxable sales from bars and restaurants for the state of Ohio. Sales data from 2003 through 2010 were evaluated for bars and restaurants separately in order to investigate whether the smoking ban influenced either business type differently.

According to researcher Elizabeth Klein, PhD, with The Ohio State University College of Public Health, the law has not had an impact on either type of business. “After accounting for unemployment and seasons of the year, the analysis found that the Smoke-Free Workplace Act did not have an economic effect on restaurants and bars in the state as a whole,” she said.

In November 2006, Ohioans passed the Smoke-Free Workplace Act, making Ohio the 12th state to protect all workers and the public from exposure to secondhand smoke in public places. Enforcement of the law began on May 3, 2007.

The law impacts approximately 280,000 “public places” and “places of employment” in Ohio. These workplaces must prohibit smoking, remove ashtrays and post no-smoking signs with the toll-free enforcement number, 1-866-559-OHIO (6446).

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“The good news is that Ohioans still overwhelmingly support the law,” said Dr. Wymyslo. A study of attitudes and behaviors related to the law show that 73 percent of adult Ohioans either strongly approve or approve of the Smoke-Free Workplace Act while eleven percent disapprove, and eight percent strongly disapprove. Approximately three out of four surveyed respondents stated they visit restaurants and bars with about the same frequency as they did before the Smoke-Free Workplace Act went into effect.

An Executive Summary of the reports follows this press release. The summary, along with the full reports, are available on the ODH Web site at www.odh.ohio.gov.