

New Jersey will not be affected by the University of Pennsylvania Health System's new policy of not hiring smokers.

UPHS operates a number of facilities in the Garden State under the name Penn Medicine, which includes facilities in Cherry Hill and Woodbury Heights.

A notice on the Philadelphia-based health system website's career page says that as of July 1, the system will cease hiring tobacco users in Pennsylvania as part of efforts to improve the health of all employees and reduce health care costs. The exemption for New Jersey employees is a result of state law, according to the website. "Because of state laws that restrict employers from having policies that limit employment opportunities based upon tobacco use." Current UPHS employees who do smoke will not lose their jobs but face higher premiums for health insurance coverage.

Vice president Judy Schueler told [NBC10](#) that officials want to not only educate patients on healthy lifestyles but serve as a model for the community.

Schueler said employees won't be tested for tobacco use, as some employers with similar bans do, but evidence that an employee lied may result in "discipline for falsification of application."

The University's website also states that spouses and dependents covered by the UPHS health care benefit plan will also have to report any tobacco use.

In addition, during our UPHS annual Open Enrollment, employees will be required to complete an attestation regarding their spouse and/or dependents use of tobacco products if they are participating in the UPHS health care benefit plan. UPHS will continue to provide free smoking cessation counseling and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to support our staff and their families in eliminating the use of tobacco products. Plan participants who are not actively enrolled in a smoking cessation program or using NRT can expect to pay a higher premium for their health care benefit.