



QuitlineNC

1-800-QUIT-NOW
1-800-784-8669

“Becoming tobacco-free is one of the most important steps our members can take to improve their health and their future. QuitlineNC provides our members with an easy and convenient resource to help them live a life free of tobacco, at no cost to them.”

Jessica Pyjas, State Health Plan

Success Story:

The NC State Health Plan Partners with QuitlineNC to Provide Services to help Members Quit Tobacco

Summary: Partnering with QuitlineNC to provide tobacco cessation services and Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), as required by the Affordable Care Act, is easy and cost-effective, and it really helps people quit tobacco.

Challenge: Providing health benefits to employees can be very costly, especially if your employee base contains many tobacco users. It is estimated that each smoking employee can cost his/her employer \$4,469 per year in excess medical care and lost productivity when compared with a non-smoker (Chenowith, 2011). On average, smokers miss between seven and 10 more days of work per year due to illness when compared to never smokers (Lundborg, 2007).

Tobacco use is the No. 1 cause of death and disability in North Carolina, causing around 15,000 deaths per year. For each death, another 30 people in North Carolina suffer from tobacco-related illnesses (US DHHS, 2014). Health care costs alone for smoking total \$3.81 billion annually, and many of these costs are shouldered by employee-paid health insurance plans (CDC, 2014).

The State Health Plan, which covers approximately 700,000 teachers, state employees, retirees and dependents, has noted increased costs for providing health care to its members with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and lung disease caused by smoking. There are also new requirements for health insurance to provide smoking cessation services under the Affordable Care Act.

Solution: Partnering with QuitlineNC through a contractual relationship with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health allows the State Health Plan to provide tobacco cessation support and Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) for its members.

Since 2010, the State Health Plan has partnered with QuitlineNC to provide tobacco cessation services, including access to free NRT, to its members who use tobacco.

The State Health Plan’s mission is to improve the health and health care of North Carolina teachers, state employees, retirees, and their dependents, in a financially sustainable manner, thereby serving as a



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Russ Rossi

Results: Providing NRT increased the State Health Plan's Return on its Investment (ROI) in QuitlineNC. In 2010-2012, for every dollar it spent on QuitlineNC services and NRT for its members, the Plan received \$3.95 ROI. During this time frame approximately 1,607 members were able to successfully overcome their tobacco use dependence.

"We believe, and the research shows, that QuitlineNC works," Pyjas said. "We know it's helping people quit."

State Health Plan member Russ Rossi quit smoking in July 2010 with the help of QuitlineNC and patches provided by the State Health Plan. He saw a poster in the office men's room for Men's Health Month encouraging him to call QuitlineNC.

"I think the best thing about Quitline was you have coaches there. You have resources to fall back on; you've got a support group," Rossi said. He had been a smoker for 43 years. Since quitting smoking nearly six years ago, Rossi has made other lifestyle changes to lead to a longer, healthier life. "That's what it's all about," he said.

Lessons Learned: Partnering with QuitlineNC is an efficient, cost-effective way to meet two goals related to providing health benefits:

- Creating healthier plan members. Since tobacco is the No. 1 cause of costly chronic diseases, helping members quit tobacco for good helps the bottom line.

Meeting Affordable Care Act requirements for providing smoking cessation to health plan members.

REFERENCES

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Lundborg, P. (2007). Does smoking increase sick leave? Evidence using register data on Swedish workers. *Tobacco Control* 16, 114-118.



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