Smokefree Policy Changes: Promoting Quitlines to Maximize the Cessation Benefit

Introduction

This fact sheet aims to encourage states to promote quitline services to the greatest extent possible coinciding with the implementation of smokefree policies. Quitlines are telephone-based tobacco cessation services that help tobacco users quit through a variety of services, including counseling, medications, information and self-help materials. Their effectiveness has been documented by numerous research studies.[1] Many states have experienced the positive benefits of capitalizing on the passage of smokefree policies to help motivated tobacco users quit through linking them to their state quitline. Possible strategies range from no-cost options, integrating quitline promotion into policy implementation activities and paid media campaigns. Each approach has the potential to increase the number of tobacco users who make a quit attempt using quitlines.

When smokefree policies are passed, collaboration between those responsible for implementing and enforcing the law and quitlines is essential. If framed properly, offering tobacco users free or reduced-cost cessation services, such as the quitline, demonstrates a genuine desire to support quit attempts. Raising quitline awareness during the policy implementation phase offers many potential benefits for smokers and the implementation effort. Most importantly, smokers and those who want to support their efforts to quit will be informed about available cessation services. Smokers who call quitlines will receive effective cessation assistance. Ultimately, quit attempts and successful quits will likely increase among motivated tobacco users.

For more information about quitlines, see the NAQC Fact Sheet *Quitline Basics: Telephone based tobacco cessation services that help tobacco users quit* on the NAQC Web site (www.naquitline.org).

Background

Eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke and promoting cessation are two evidence-based strategies cited by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that can contribute to a reduction in the disease, disability and death related to tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure.[2] As described in a 2007 fact sheet prepared by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK), key reports and studies have consistently documented reductions in tobacco use prevalence and

snapshots
Examples from the field

Maryland: Creating a Perfect Storm[6]

In Maryland, preparations for the implementation of the smokefree law (effective Feb. 1, 2008) included a multi-pronged approach. Strategies included outreach to healthcare providers; providing free promotional items (e.g. coasters, window clings, pens, mints and napkins) to bars and restaurants that included the quitline phone number; work with local health departments to distribute promotional items; launch of a new media campaign, "Clean Air Maryland," promoting the quitline; and news releases surrounding the January tax increase, New Year's resolutions and the smokefree law resulting in editorials and news stories

Arizona: Preparing the "Top Public Places"

In Arizona, staff from the Arizona Department of Health Services – Office of Environmental Health (OEH) set out to brainstorm the top ten large public places where people gather such as airports, malls, convention centers, ball parks and stadiums, college campuses, gas stations and large national retail chains. The final list included 27 locations. Three months before the smokefree law went into effect, phone calls were placed to notify the managers or management companies for each of these venues about the requirements of the new law and to invite them to participate in an on-site visit. These visits included an assessment of the facility/property to collectively determine with property

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Tips for Framing the Cessation Message: Smokefree Messages

States have been creative in the ways they have framed the cessation message and integrated quitline promotion to fit the state's needs. They have successfully identified messages that express a supportive, helpful message to smokers without alienating them. This is important given the negative feelings among smokers that often accompany smokefree laws.

Options for framing the cessation message range from making an explicit connection to the law to no connection at all. Some examples used by states include:

General messages

- There's never been a better time to quit.
- Where can I get information on quitting?
- If I smoke and want to quit, where can I get help?
- If you are thinking about quitting, the quitline is here to help.
- If you are a smoker and would like to quit, this is the ideal time to kick the habit.

- If you decide to quit, the quitline can help.
- Whether you are just thinking about it, are ready to stop smoking or have already quit, the quitline can help.

Smokefree-related messages

- Help your employees quit.
- How can I support my employees and patrons if they want to quit smoking?
- If you can no longer smoke at work and want to quit, the quitline is here to help.
- People are quitting because of the new smokefree law! You can too. (Include relevant data to demonstrate increase in calls to the quitline).
- Compliance with the new smokefree law is high (Insert relevant compliance data) and many smokers are finding out that now is a great time to quit.
- The new law is an excellent opportunity for employees and patrons to quit smoking.

Tips for Timing of Promotions: Before, During and After Implementation of the Smokefree Policy

From the time the smokefree law passes to its implementation date and beyond, tobacco users may choose to quit. Smokefree laws can go into effect within weeks, months or more than a year from the date of passage. Keep in mind smokers may begin looking for help once the policy passes regardless of how far out the implementation date. Others may not be motivated to quit until the policy's implementation date draws near.

Once the passage of a smokefree policy looks like it will succeed, begin preparing a quitline promotions plan. This will help capitalize on the opportunity while the law's passage is still fresh. Rather than reinventing the wheel, refer to other states' examples for message framing and promotion of the quitline services. Continue to promote the quitline leading up to and after the law goes into effect. Additionally, seek successful quitters to help demonstrate increased demand and illustrate support for tobacco users who are still deciding whether or not to quit.

consumption following the implementation of smokefree policies and restrictions.[3] The evidence that more tobacco users attempt to quit following the passage of smokefree policies provides a unique opportunity to maximize the positive impact of policy changes on secondhand smoke exposure and cessation.[4]

As states continue to pass smokefree laws, quitlines offer a unique and cost-effective opportunity to provide cessation support to a broad and diverse population of tobacco users motivated to quit. Easy access to cessation services and promotion are essential to connect tobacco users who are ready to quit with evidence-based treatments and services.[5]

The information and recommendations in this fact sheet highlight information gathered for the *NAQC Policy Playbook: A Guide to Promoting Quitlines During Policy Change*. More than 20 states contributed to this compilation of ideas and strategies that demonstrate the benefits of actively promoting quitlines during policy change.

Assessing the Opportunities to Promote Quitlines: Steps to Consider

■ **Estimate the potential increase in demand for quitline services** – The increased demand for quitline services resulting from policy changes is difficult to determine precisely, but past state- or local-level experiences can be assessed to develop an estimate. This is an important step to help determine the best approach to promoting the quitline.

- Assess the percent of population covered – Determine the percent of your state's population covered by local smokefree laws prior to implementation of the statewide law and assess the impact local laws had on quitline call volumes, if this information is available. Use this information to estimate the potential increase in calls to the quitline once the entire state population is covered by a smokefree law.

- Review results from previous quitline promotions – Work with the quitline service provider to review and analyze data related to previous or ongoing quitline promotions and outreach efforts.

■ **Learn from other states** – Identify states similar in population size and composition, smoking prevalence, length of time to plan for implementation, quitline services and/or political environment. Ask your counterparts in those states about their experiences, lessons learned and recommendations for implementing smokefree laws.

■ **Discuss current or planned quitline promotions** – The level of ongoing or planned quitline promotional activity may impact the decision of how much additional promotion to conduct during the policy implementation campaign. Identifying who is responsible for quitline promotions early on and reviewing the existing plans and past experiences can help decide how to promote the quitline during policy changes. If multiple entities are responsible for promoting the quitline, gather information from each organization.

Remember to consider all current or planned promotional strategies, not just paid media campaigns, including efforts to generate earned news media coverage, provision of free or reduced-cost NRT or medication, fax referrals, other forms of healthcare provider outreach, pharmaceutical detailing, online campaigns and other outreach efforts.

■ **Consider quitline operational issues** – Assess the following aspects of quitline operations to determine if

Tips to Prepare for a Smokefree Law

Ideally, each time a smokefree policy is adopted the responsible entities for implementation should consider integrating the quitline into policy implementation efforts. This proposed process is intended to help the quitline and the organizations responsible for policy implementation work together to assess promotion opportunities. The information gathered during this assessment can help determine how to integrate quitline promotion into the policy implementation effort. This process takes each state's unique needs into consideration.

the quitline can handle a possible increase in calls:

- Quitline capacity (i.e. how many calls can the quitline handle per day, per week, per month).
- Quitline budget for counseling services and for free or reduced-cost NRT or medication (if applicable).
- Are additional sources of funding for quitline services available?

■ **Gather input from the quitline service provider** – Meet with the quitline service provider to discuss necessary preparations and contingency plans.

- Work together to estimate the potential impact on calls to the quitline by talking to other states that have implemented similar policies and assessing past experience with local policy implementation and promotions.
- Discuss staffing, service level (e.g. length of call, type of service, eligibility), contingency and budget considerations.

■ **Assess funding availability** – How to promote the quitline will certainly depend on available funding for the policy implementation effort and/or quitline promotions. If funding is available for smokefree policy implementation, the cost of integrating the quitline into these efforts could be minimal. If implementation funds cannot be used to promote the quitline, other sources may be available from the quitline funder, non-profits, healthcare organizations or others interested in maximizing the cessation benefit from policy changes.

■ **Identify other available cessation services** – If the quitline budget for counseling will not support the

Understanding the Impact on the Quitline

Tracking the impact of smokefree laws and excise tax increases on quitlines is important to demonstrate the positive effect of policy changes on cessation and to help quitlines prepare for increased demand. Tracking the impact of policy changes is challenging given the many other factors that motivate tobacco users to call quitlines. Media, both paid and earned, provision of free or reduced-cost NRT, fax referrals, health care provider outreach, fax referral programs, multiple policies (e.g., excise tax increases and smokefree laws implemented around the same time) and community-level promotions all generate quitline calls. Most states use multiple strategies to promote their quitlines, making it difficult to unravel the effects of these various approaches and pinpoint the true impact of policy changes.

Despite these challenges, tracking call volumes, utilization and motivators to quit is important. The *NAQC Policy Playbook* includes real life approaches demonstrating the impact of smokefree laws on quitlines (See section "Tracking Success").

Additional Resources
Available at www.naquitline.org

North American Quitline Consortium. (2008). *NAQC Policy Playbook: A Guide to Promoting Quitlines During Policy Change*. Phoenix, Arizona.

North American Quitline Consortium. (2008). *Fact Sheet, Tobacco Tax Increases: Promoting Quitlines to Maximize the Cessation Benefit*. Phoenix, Arizona.

North American Quitline Consortium. (2008). *Case Studies: About NAQC Case Studies*. Phoenix, Arizona.

North American Quitline Consortium. (2008). *Case Study: Maximizing the Cessation Benefit from State Policy Changes: Arizona*. Phoenix, Arizona.

North American Quitline Consortium. (2007). *Case Study: Maximizing the Cessation Benefit from State Policy Changes: Colorado*. Phoenix, Arizona.

North American Quitline Consortium. (2008). *Case Study: Maximizing the Cessation Benefit from State Policy Changes: Nevada*. Phoenix, Arizona.

Steps to Consider

anticipated increase in calls, identify other cessation services that can service tobacco users if needed.
- Contact community-based, online or clinic-based service providers to determine ability to handle referrals from the quitline.
- Establish referral protocol to fit tobacco users' and each service providers' needs.

■ **Assess the political environment** – The nature of the campaign to pass a smokefree law and the level of political support following passage should be considered when determining how to integrate quitline promotion with policy implementation. Some other factors to consider include:
- Results of polling data. Is there support for or resistance to incorporating the cessation message?
- Opposition to the policy (organized or independent).
- Legal challenges to the policy.
- Nature of the media coverage related to the policy (supportive, neutral or negative).

Snapshot

managers potential compliance challenges that could arise. Discussing certain issues such as how to handle break areas, loading docks and contractors before the law went into effect helped these public places prepare for implementation day.

Montana: Fully Integrating the Quitline in Media

In preparation for smokefree bars and restaurants, Montana integrated the quitline with all media including an implementation campaign highlighting true stories about the impact of secondhand smoke on lives. The quitline information was included at the end of the ads and the voice over asked viewers to support smokefree bars and restaurants and call the quitline if ready to quit.

Minnesota: Using Online Strategies

In Minnesota, use of online strategies helped promote the quitline and the smokefree law. Minnesota used online advertising (and other strategies) to promote the smokefree law and the quitline with the tagline, "Minnesota went smokefree on Oct. 1, 2007. How about you? Get free help to quit smoking." The implementation Web site called freshairmn.org included a wealth of information about cessation services, including the quitline.

Learn More

NAQC Web site

To learn more about NAQC's policy work including policy-related case studies, please visit the "Policy" section on the site (**www.naquitline.org**).

Toolkit for Implementing Smoke-Free Laws

The Toolkit for Implementing Smoke-Free Laws is a clearinghouse of tools, tips and resources to help you effectively implement your smoke-free law. The Toolkit was developed by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Americans for Non-Smokers Rights and Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (**www.goingsmokefree.org**).

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

By changing public attitudes and public policies on tobacco, CTFK strives to prevent kids from smoking, help smokers quit and protect everyone from secondhand smoke (**www.tobaccofreekids.org**).

References

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[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs—2007*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; October 2007.

[3] Barry, Matt. *Smokefree Laws Encourage Smokers to Quit and Discourage Youth from Starting*. Washington, DC: Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, July 2007.

[4] National Cancer Institute. *Population Based Smoking Cessation: Proceedings of a Conference on What Works to Influence Cessation in the General Population*, Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 12, NIH Pub. No. 00-4892, November 2000.

[5] *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Telephone Quitlines: A Resource for Development, Implementation and Evaluation*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, Final Edition, September 2004.

[6] DiClemente, Carlo C. *MDQuit NEWSLETTER*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Resource Center for Quitting Use & Initiation of Tobacco, Volume 1, Issue 4, November 2007.
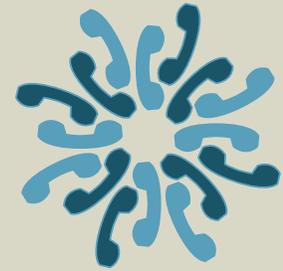
About the North American Quitline Consortium (NAQC)

NAQC is a nonprofit organization that strives to promote evidence based quitline services across diverse communities in North America. By bringing quitline partners together, including state and provincial quitline administrators, quitline service providers, researchers and national organizations in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, NAQC helps facilitate shared learning and encourages a better understanding of quitline operations, promotions and effectiveness to improve quitline services.

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