

# Strategies & Recommendations for Promoting Quitlines in National Media

## Introduction

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.<sup>1</sup> Their effectiveness has been documented by numerous research studies.<sup>2</sup> Coordinating with governmental, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and commercial organizations interested in promoting quitlines at a national level presents an important opportunity to expand the number of U.S. tobacco users contacting quitlines for help. When promotional strategies are national in scope, such as media promotion of 1-800-QUIT-NOW,<sup>3</sup> the toll-free national portal number that routes callers to their respective state quitline, they have great potential to increase the number of tobacco users who quit using evidence-based cessation treatments such as quitlines. While beneficial for expanding reach, these increases in call volume may have a significant impact on quitlines' staffing

and resource needs. Given this, coordination and communication are essential to build on the ongoing work of quitline funders, service providers and national organizations and to ensure quitlines are effectively promoted.



## Background

The 2004 launch of the North American Quitline Consortium (NAQC) and the formation of the National Network of Tobacco Cessation Quitlines, a remarkable partnership among the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Cancer Institute (NCI), the states and NAQC, have greatly advanced quitline promotional efforts. Through 1-800-QUIT-NOW, all U.S. tobacco users now have access to free cessation services in their states. As a result, national organizations and media need only to include one phone number when providing information to the public or writing stories about tobacco-use cessation.

Enhanced coordination between quitlines and those interested in promoting 1-800-QUIT-NOW can help better serve the interests of all parties. The information included in this fact sheet is intended to help capture the opportunities national media present and address the potential challenges generated by surges in the number of calls to quitlines such media might generate.

NAQC's role in national quitline promotions is to facilitate

information sharing, coordination and communication. In its current capacity, NAQC does not conduct national promotions of 1-800-QUIT-NOW, but does represent the diverse community of quitlines and need for effective promotions.

The ideas and strategies presented in this fact sheet were developed as part of the *Building Consensus: National Quitline Promotions* project made possible through a two-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). This grant allowed the U.S. quitline community to work with national organizations on a plan to move forward with promoting 1-800-QUIT-NOW in national media. The document, *Partnering to Promote Quitlines: A Plan to Coordinate the Effective Use of 1-800-QUIT-NOW in National Media and Considerations for Other Promotional Strategies*, includes more in-depth background and information. This fact sheet is primarily focused on the main quitline-related issues that promoters should consider when planning a media promotion of 1-800-QUIT-NOW.



### Guiding Assumptions for National Quitline Promotions

The following assumptions were developed based on information gathered from NAQC members, promoters and NAQC Advisory Council members. These assumptions provide a set of conditions under which national promotions should operate for optimal coordination and collaboration. They represent a shared understanding of the issues and current realities of promoting state-run quitlines with different goals, budgets, capacities and target populations.

- 1 Ongoing national promotions of 1-800-QUIT-NOW are valuable as such promotions can help achieve common goals of increasing public awareness of quitlines and/or the number of tobacco users reached for counseling services, thereby decreasing the toll of tobacco on health as more tobacco users quit.
- 2 Quitlines may not have the budget and/or capacity to handle call increases that result from national promotions due to insufficient funding, limited budgets or fluctuations that occur during a state's budget cycle. Funding for the delivery of quitline services may present a constant challenge for some states requiring financial assistance from either the state or other sources to continue operations.
- 3 Gradual increases in call volumes are more manageable and generally result in higher quality services than call volume surges. Generating a volume of calls that quitlines can sustain long-term is important for quitline management.
- 4 The current funding model is such that states operate and pay for quitline services. Given this, quitlines will continue to tailor services and the marketing of these services to meet the unique needs of their states' populations.
- 5 Funding for state-level promotions varies significantly in many states and can fluctuate annually. Despite this, the majority of states are motivated to continue planning and executing promotions to reach target populations and otherwise fit specific needs.
- 6 In some instances, national media can be purchased more cost-effectively and efficiently than regional or state-by-state media.
- 7 Addressing the unique needs of every quitline while maintaining the efficiencies of a national effort present logistic and economic challenges for national promotions.
- 8 Compromising and finding a workable balance between national and state needs related to promoting quitline services is necessary for national promotions to be successful.
- 9 Knowing the details of media buys in advance is valuable for quitlines but the amount of notice and level of detail provided can be limited by factors beyond promoters' control. These factors can influence promoters' ability to respond to information requests from funders and service providers, which would assist with short- and long-term planning.



*When promotion strategies are national in scope, such as media promotion of 1-800-QUIT-NOW, they have great potential to increase the number of tobacco users who quit using evidence-based cessation treatments such as quitlines.*

## Standards

These standards offer guidelines for planning national promotions and media buys. They answer the questions below, which are related to the concerns and challenges presented by national quitline promotions. When reviewing these standards, it is important to acknowledge earned media present a unique set of challenges given limited control over when and where stories run and uncertainties about exact timing. Additional collaboration and discussion with national promoters is needed to reach consensus on these standards and the best way to implement them to fit a promoter's goals and quitline needs.

What time of year are national promotions needed?

The second and third quarters of the year are generally the slowest times for quitline call volumes. Running national promotions during the months of April through September could help increase calls to quitlines.

During what times of day should national ads run?

National promoters should attempt to run television ads, which tend to generate the highest call volumes, during core hours of operation when quitlines are well staffed or can pull in additional staff as needed. Quitlines and promoters should identify a media schedule to accommodate most quitlines and take the different time zones into consideration, acknowledging the best time of day can also depend on the intended demographic reach for a promotion, the type of

media used (e.g. radio or television) and the message being promoted. The *Quitline Hours of Operation* available on NAQC's Web site ([www.naquitline.org](http://www.naquitline.org)) can be used as a reference for this standard.

How often will the ads run?

Agreeing to a reasonable frequency that allows quitlines to handle calls with minimal negative impact on customer service (e.g. long wait times, lost calls and busy signals) is critical.

What is the best rollout strategy for national promotions?

The preferred approach is to gradually introduce ads by region or in short blocks of time (e.g. three weeks) to prevent overwhelming the entire, national quitline system at once. Timing and frequency decisions (items 2 and 3 above) could alleviate the need for a gradual roll out. A regional approach could also allow the quitline network to gradually gauge a promotion's impact before rolling out nationally.

How much notice will quitlines receive before the launch of a national promotion?

The minimum recommended notice is 30 days, but the ideal would be 90 days or more. Some quitlines would benefit from even more notice so they can adjust state promotion plans, which are sometimes planned six months to a year in advance.

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## Quitline Hours of Operation

Ideally, quitlines strive to answer or respond to calls from tobacco users as quickly as possible to capture callers' interest in quitting and to build on what motivated them to pick up the telephone. When tobacco users try to contact quitlines during non-operating hours, they may get frustrated and motivation may dwindle by the time the quitline reaches them. Sometimes, reaching interested tobacco users at a convenient time can be difficult.

To better understand when quitline services are available in each of the states and provinces, NAQC compiled *Quitline Hours of Operation* available on the NAQC Web site at [www.naquitline.org](http://www.naquitline.org). In general, quitlines answer incoming calls from 48 hours per week to 24 hours per day. Most have reduced weekend hours and just under half closed at 9:00pm or earlier on weeknights. This reference should help promoters better understand the realities of quitline operations and plan accordingly to minimize quitlines' need to track down callers and to maximize service delivery.

### Information Sharing

The information below represents a compilation of the details quitlines have identified as useful to receive before a national promotion occurs. These items, when available and applicable, have been consistently mentioned by members as important and helpful for understanding an upcoming promotion and for planning quitlines' response. National promotions of 1-800-QUIT-NOW have great potential to increase the number of tobacco users reached and counseled for tobacco use cessation throughout North America. While beneficial for expanding quitline reach, these increases in call volume may have a significant impact on quitlines' abilities to provide services to all callers. Adequate

information and advanced notice can help quitlines assess staffing levels, protocols and contingencies needed to handle potential call increases.

Due to the nature of earned media (i.e. uncertainties regarding when, where and what information will be included in a story), providing certain details in advance may be more challenging. Despite this, quitlines would benefit from receiving as much information as possible about paid and earned media initiated by any organization promoting 1-800-QUIT-NOW, even if the information is tentative or incomplete.

### Information Useful for Quitlines to Receive Prior to a National Promotion

#### Background

- What background information was used to create the national promotion?
  - Campaign goals and objectives
  - Theories applied
  - Results and findings from field testing
  - Formative research
- What audience(s) is the promotion intended to reach?

#### Content

- What “call to action” is being promoted in the ads?
  - 1-800-QUIT-NOW
  - Web site(s)
  - Both
  - Other
- What is the content of ads? (Provide scripts and/or electronic copies)

#### Frequency and Placement

- When or how often will the ads run? Provide details of the:
  - Media buy
  - Target Rating Points (TRPs)/Gross Rating Points (GRPs)
  - Reach
  - Frequency

- Where will the ads run, be placed or used?
  - Television
  - Print
  - Radio
  - Web
  - Outdoor (e.g. bus stops, billboards)
  - Grassroots strategies
  - Indoor venues
  - Direct mail
  - Other
- For how long will the national promotion run and will the flights be staggered (e.g. three weeks on, three weeks off)?

#### Potential Impact

- What is the best estimate of the potential impact on quitline calls and what is the basis (e.g. pilot test, focus groups) for these estimates?

#### Responding to the Promotion

- What are the key anticipated questions and responses important to know about the promotion?
- What are the potential areas of concern related to the promotion?

#### Integration

- What strategies and opportunities are there for incorporating the national promotion into existing “local” promotion efforts, including media and non-media approaches?

#### Evaluation

- What is the plan for evaluating the promotion?

## Understanding the Impact of National Promotions

Collecting quitline data to better understand the impact of national promotions is important to make adjustments, evaluate promotional efforts and assist in future promotions. Quitline evaluators and researchers, service providers, funders and national organizations can collaborate to develop a consistent and feasible way to define, report and analyze data. Different quitline technologies, database structures, data collection

procedures and wording of questions can make data analysis difficult as can data privacy concerns. Not all quitlines may be able to provide all of the information suggested below. Funding for this effort could help address concerns and alleviate some challenges especially for states with limited budgets for reporting and extracting data. The specific data elements that could help assess impact are listed below.

### Key Data Elements to Help Assess National Promotion Impact

#### Call Volumes

- Total calls received by specific phone number (e.g. 1-800-QUIT-NOW, unique state numbers) for a specified period of time
- Total calls answered live (i.e. by an actual person, not voice mail)

#### Call Details

- When calls were received:
  - Days of the week
  - Time of day
  - Other
- Types of callers:
  - Tobacco users
  - Proxies (e.g. friend, family, coworker)
  - Employers
  - Other
  - Healthcare providers
- How callers heard about the quitline – Track specific promotions by adding response options related to each

#### Customer Service Levels

- Percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds
- Percentage of abandoned calls
- Average hold times
- Number of calls that go to voicemail
- Length of time to return voice mail messages

#### Call Outcomes – Result of Calls

- Number of unique individuals contacting the quitline
- Percent of callers completing registration (e.g. Minimal Data Set questions)
- Percent of unique callers selecting a service by type of service (e.g. self-help materials, phone counseling, Web-based, etc.)
- Enrollment or registration rates by program type (e.g. brief, proactive, etc.)

#### Caller Demographics

- To help assess the ads' appeal to different audiences:
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - Education level

#### Potential Confounding Factors

- List of promotional factors that may have contributed to call volumes during a promotion:
  - State-level promotions (paid and earned)
  - NRT offers
  - Policy changes
  - Others

#### Operational Impact

- Document the impact of the promotion on quitline operational costs



### Moving Forward

The range of promotional strategies successfully conducted by state and local organizations over the past few years demonstrate the eventual need for a long-term, coordinated approach to nationally promoting 1-800-QUIT-NOW using more than just paid media. NAQC members and partners have identified several key issues to be addressed to successfully move forward with national quitline promotions:

- 1 Understanding the impact or effectiveness of national promotions.
- 2 Developing a long-term strategy to actively promote quitlines nationally.
- 3 Continuing to identify options for and availability of funding to provide financial assistance to quitlines so they can serve all callers in response to national promotions.
- 4 Promoting quitlines to priority populations.
- 5 Educating federal and state-level stakeholders on the continued need for tobacco cessation funding.

NAQC will continue to monitor issues related to national quitline promotions and explore opportunities to enhance coordination as funding permits. The development of a long-range plan will require additional funding and commitment from quitline funders, service providers, researchers and promoters. However, such an effort has great potential to benefit millions of tobacco users by directing them to state quitlines for evidence-based tobacco cessation services to help them quit and lead healthier lives.

### Resources Used for this Publication

North American Quitline Consortium. (2008). *Partnering to Promote Quitlines: A Plan to Coordinate the Effective Use of 1-800-QUIT-NOW in National Media and Considerations for Other Promotional Strategies*. Phoenix, Arizona.

North American Quitline Consortium. (2007). *Promoting Telephone-Based Tobacco Cessation Services: A collaborative approach to moving the promotion dialogue forward*. Phoenix, Arizona.

North American Quitline Consortium. (2008). *Quitline Hours of Operation*. Phoenix, Arizona.

### Standards (continued from page 3)

Will 1-800-QUIT-NOW be promoted in the ads?

The preference is that the existing toll-free number (1-800-QUIT-NOW) be used rather than another number to provide consistency, avoid confusion and continue the benefits of the existing infrastructure supported by NCI. This system currently connects callers to the appropriate state quitline with one easy phone number.

What “service” should be promoted in the national campaign?

States vary in what services and products they offer. Working with quitline representatives to identify “universal” language that describes services offered by all quitlines and promotes the idea of cessation would best serve quitlines and help avoid confusion.

Will the planned promotion conflict with any other major national efforts or large-scale state-level promotions?

Quitlines could have trouble responding to calls generated from multiple national promotion campaigns. In addition, some states begin planning promotions a year in advance. Minimally, both promoters and quitlines should exchange information about their campaigns, work to identify potential conflicts and develop contingency plans if necessary.

## Learn More

### *NAQC Web site:*

To learn more about NAQC's work on national promotions, please visit the "Promotions" section of NAQC's Web site ([www.naquitline.org](http://www.naquitline.org)).

### *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Media Campaign Resource Center (MCRC):*

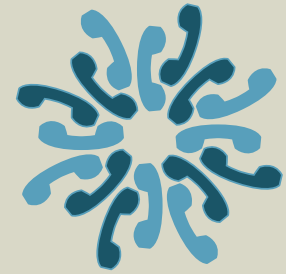
The MCRC provides access to CDC-licensed advertisements developed by more than 25 state health departments, nonprofit health organizations and federal agencies and offers guidance and technical assistance on how to use the materials ([www.cdc.gov/tobacco/media\\_communications/countermarketing/mcrc/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/media_communications/countermarketing/mcrc/index.htm)).

### *Global Dialogue for Effective Stop Smoking Campaigns:*

Since 2005, the Global Dialogue project has sought to address the need for updated and accessible international smoking cessation campaign lessons learned ([www.stopsmokingcampaigns.org](http://www.stopsmokingcampaigns.org)).

### *References & Notations*

- 1 Ossip-Klein, D. and McIntosh, S. (2003). Quitlines in North America: Evidence base and applications. *The American Journal of Medical Sciences*. 326(4), 201-205.
- 2 Fiore MC, Jaen CR, Baker TB, et al. (May 2008). *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update. Clinical Practice Guideline*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service.
- 3 1-800-QUIT-NOW is a national toll-free number that links callers with the quitline in their state (based on area code of the call). The number is supported by the Cancer Information Service at the National Institutes of Health, US DHHS, and was launched in November 2004. Through December 2008, over 1.5 million calls have been received.



### 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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