

States Should Provide Cessation Coverage to Medicaid Enrollees



The Problem

Over 59 million people in the U.S. are enrolled in state Medicaid programs.¹ Some of the highest rates of smoking are found among these Medicaid enrollees; 36.5 percent of adults (ages 18-65) enrolled in Medicaid smoke, compared to 22.7 percent of the same-aged general population.²

The addiction not only costs these smokers their health, but it also costs the federal and state governments money. In 2004, tobacco-related healthcare costs for Medicaid enrollees averaged \$607 million (large states spent much more – New York spent \$5.4 billion). That is 11 percent of total average Medicaid expenditures – and billions of dollars of expense that governments could have saved.³

The Solution

Helping smokers enrolled in Medicaid quit will save their lives and save states money. Fortunately there are several treatments that increase smokers' chances of quitting for good. Nicotine replacement therapy, other medications, and three types of counseling have all been recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as effective in helping smokers quit.⁴

States should help Medicaid enrollees quit smoking by providing all of these treatments as a covered benefit through their Medicaid plans. Having coverage of these treatments and providing them at low or no cost is especially important for people in these programs, as they are by definition low-income and less able to pay for treatments on their own.

States Are NOT Doing Enough

Medicaid coverage of cessation treatments varies widely state-by-state. Most states cover some type of cessation benefit, but the overwhelming majority do not provide comprehensive coverage.

Only 6 states cover comprehensive cessation benefits:

- ➔ Indiana
- ➔ Massachusetts
- ➔ Minnesota
- ➔ Nevada
- ➔ North Carolina
- ➔ Pennsylvania

2 States Provide NO Cessation Coverage*:

- ➔ Alabama
- ➔ Georgia

* The federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act requires all state Medicaid programs to cover tobacco cessation treatments for pregnant women.

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts, Total Medicaid Enrollment FY2008. Accessed December 2011. Available at: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparemaptable.jsp?ind=198&cat=4>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. National Health Interview Survey, 2009.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sustaining State Programs for Tobacco Control: Data Highlights 2006. 2006. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/state_data/data_highlights/2006/00_pdfs/DataHighlights06rev.pdf

⁴ See American Lung Association factsheet "What Works to Help Smokers Quit?"