

State Employee Health Plans Should Cover Cessation Treatments



Smoking kills more than 443,000 Americans each year. In addition to being deadly, smoking is also extremely costly – in 2004, smoking cost the country \$193 billion in lost productivity and healthcare expenditures.ⁱ States are bearing the brunt of these escalating costs. One of the ways state governments can save money is by helping employees and their families quit smoking through health insurance coverage.

Why is it important for state employee health plans to cover cessation treatments?

- ▶ State employee health plans cover millions of people in this country. In 2002, 3.4 million people were insured through one of these plans.ⁱⁱ Providing cessation coverage through state employee health plans will reach a large amount of smokers who need help.
- ▶ State employee health plans are often used as a standard or example for other health plans in a state. Leading by example, these plans can help non-state employees too.
- ▶ States can save a significant amount of money in tobacco-related healthcare costs by helping smokers quit. A recent study conducted by Penn State University showed that for every \$1 a state spends on helping smokers quit, the average potential return on investment is \$1.26.ⁱⁱⁱ

How states can help their employees quit:

Several treatments have been proven to increase a smoker's chances of quitting for good. There are five nicotine-replacement-therapies (gum, patch, lozenge, nasal spray, inhaler) that can help smokers, as well as two non-nicotine medications (bupropion and varenicline, known by the brand names Zyban and Chantix). Smokers also benefit from cessation counseling, and individual, group and phone counseling, which have all been proven to work.

State employees should have coverage for *all* of these treatments – this will maximize the likelihood of smokers quitting. Many quitters need to try multiple treatments before finding one that works. States can provide this coverage a variety of ways, including through their employee wellness program, prescription drug plan, or ensuring coverage through contracts with managed care organizations or health maintenance organizations.

Five states are leading the way.

Coverage of cessation treatments for state employees varies widely state-to-state. Right now, five states provide a comprehensive benefit, fully taking advantage of the opportunity to save money and lives by helping their employees quit smoking. Five other states provide no benefits at all.

5 States Provide Comprehensive Cessation Coverage for State Employees:

- ✓ Illinois
- ✓ Indiana
- ✓ Maine
- ✓ New Mexico
- ✓ North Dakota

2 States Provide NO Cessation Coverage for State Employees:

- ✗ Maryland
- ✗ Louisiana

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Morbidity, and Economic Costs (SAMMEC): Adult Software. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008.

ⁱⁱ Kaiser Family Foundation, Health Research and Educational Trust, "Kaiser/HRET Survey: 2002 State Employee Health Plans". Available at: <http://www.kff.org/insurance/upload/Kaiser-HRET-Survey-2002-State-Employee-Health-Plans-Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ American Lung Association, Penn State University. *Smoking Cessation: the Economic Benefits*. September 15, 2010. Available at: www.lungusa.org/cessationbenefits