

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in Kentucky. This toolkit provides guidance for implementing the Preferred Network Employers initiative in the workplace.

Dear Insurers:

Tobacco use is costly to employers in terms of smoking-related medical expenses and lost productivity.

- Ten percent of smokers today are living with a smoking-related illness.
- Each adult smoker cost employers \$1,760 in lost productivity and \$1,623 in medical expenditures.
- Tobacco use causes heart disease, stroke, multiple cancers, respiratory diseases and other costly illnesses.
- Secondhand smoke causes lung disease and lung cancer in nonsmokers.
- Smoking increases costly complications of pregnancy, such as pre-term delivery and low birth-weight infants.

Paying for evidence based tobacco use cessation treatments is the single most cost-effective health insurance benefit employers can provide to employees. These tobacco cessation treatments are safe and effective in helping smokers to quit. Treatments include counseling and medications, or a combination of both.

- Face-to-face and interactive telephone counseling are more effective than services that only provide educational or self-help materials.
- The Food and Drug Administration has approved some medications to help smokers quit.
 - Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) relieve withdrawal symptoms. They include nicotine gum, patch, nasal spray, inhaler and lozenge.
 - Non-nicotine medications reduce the urge to smoke by affecting the same chemical messengers in the brain that are affected by nicotine. They include Zyban, Wellbutrin and Chantix.

The benefits in using proven tobacco-use cessation treatments have been shown to increase the number of people taking advantage of the treatment opportunity and the number of people successful in quitting. Tobacco cessation benefits should:

- Cover at least four counseling sessions of at least 30 minutes each, including proactive telephone counseling and individual counseling.
- Cover both prescription and over-the-counter nicotine replacement medication and bupropion, Wellbutrin, and Chantix.
- Provide counseling and medication coverage for at least two smoking cessation attempts per year.
- Eliminate or minimize co-pays or deductibles for counseling and medications, as even small copayments reduce the use of proven treatments.

Tobacco cessation is more cost-effective than other common and covered disease prevention interventions, such as the treatment of hypertension and high blood cholesterol. Thank you for supporting this lifechanging program. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Let's join together in combating this burden and improving Kentucky business's bottom line.

