

An Action Plan for Helping Smokers Quit



Everyone – including the federal government, state governments, employers and insurance companies – can and should be doing more to help smokers quit and save lives and money. The American Lung Association recommends the following:

- ➔ All healthcare plans should fully cover **comprehensive smoking cessation programs** for all members. This includes Medicare, state Medicaid¹ programs, state employee health plans, employer-sponsored plans, and other private insurance plans inside and outside of state exchanges. Comprehensive coverage consists of all seven medications FDA-approved for smoking cessation, as well as individual, group and phone counseling.
- ➔ Tobacco cessation treatment must be **easy to access**. This means eliminating co-pays, duration limits, prior authorization requirements, stepped care therapy, and other requirements for cessation medications and counseling. Eliminating these barriers to coverage is especially important for low-income populations, like Medicaid recipients and the newly insured.
- ➔ Healthcare plans should **widely publicize** their smoking cessation coverage to plan members and healthcare providers.
- ➔ Healthcare plans should package and promote smoking cessation benefits in a way that is easy for plan members to find information about the coverage and **understand how to use it**.
- ➔ Public, private and marketplace/exchange healthcare plans should **track and report** utilization rates for smoking cessation treatments as well as quit rates among their members.
- ➔ Healthcare plans should **reimburse** their participating clinicians for providing smoking cessation counseling and referring patients to other cessation treatments.
- ➔ State legislatures and/or insurance regulators should require all insurance companies operating in the state to cover defined, comprehensive smoking cessation treatments as a **minimum standard benefit**. Regulators should establish systems to ensure compliance with these provisions. Standardizing this coverage will make it easier for patients and healthcare providers to understand. Additionally, states should include a comprehensive smoke cessation benefit in their Essential Health Benefit Benchmark plan.
- ➔ Health plan purchasers, both public and private, should **insert specific provisions** into all contracts with health plans to provide coverage of comprehensive cessation treatments. Language in these provisions should be detailed and specific to ensure comprehensive coverage. Purchasers must ensure compliance with these provisions.
- ➔ **Statewide quitlines** are a vital component of cessation coverage and should be adequately supported and funded by the state policymakers. These quitlines can and should provide a vital link between all other cessation treatments offered in the state.

¹ As of January 2014, all Medicaid plans are required to cover tobacco cessation medications. See the Lung Association's [factsheet](#) on this requirement.