

Advocating for Medicaid Coverage of Tobacco Treatment Resources in Kentucky



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The Problem

History: Kentucky is a national leader in tobacco use. Tobacco is a major cash crop for farmers, and KY is the top grower of burley tobacco in the US.

Tobacco Use in KY: High prevalence of tobacco use has long been the social norm. Current prevalence is 25.2%; persons with Medicaid = 50%. KY smokers consume an average of 621 packs per year.

Cost of Tobacco Use in KY: Rates of lung cancer in KY are the highest in the US. Death rates from tobacco-related illness are 25% higher than the U.S. average. Smoking costs KY Medicaid almost \$700 million/year.

The Policymaking Process

2004 General Assembly: Bill introduced but failed passage in the Kentucky State Senate to cover tobacco cessation treatment for Medicaid recipients.

2005 General Assembly: Cigarette tax rate increased from \$0.03/pack (lowest in the nation) to \$0.30/pack. Medicaid coverage for cessation counseling for pregnant smokers added to the budget.

2005 Post-Session: Provider survey revealed no awareness or implementation of Medicaid budget provision.

2006 Pre-session: Advocacy groups met with legislators and key players.

2006 General Assembly: Bill to provide comprehensive tobacco cessation benefits for Medicaid passed in House but stalled in Senate.

2007 Pre-session: RWJF grant obtained by the American Cancer Society to work on Medicaid coverage with the Medicaid Consortium.

2007 General Assembly: HB 337 to provide cessation coverage for Medicaid recipients passed unanimously and signed into law March, 2007 as an unfunded mandate.*

2008 Pre-session: Advocacy focus shifted to increasing cigarette tax from \$0.30 to \$1/pack to raise revenue to support the mandate and reduce tobacco use.**

2008 General Assembly: Raising cigarette tax to \$1/ pack received public support but ultimately failed.

2009 Pre-session: Advocacy efforts persisted to push for the cigarette tax increase.

2009 General Assembly: Cigarette tax increased to \$0.60/pack and took effect April 1. Additional funds not earmarked for cessation but placed in the general fund.

2010 Pre-session: Working group formed to advocate for Medicaid funding of cessation coverage. Legislative champions sought; strategic plan focused on supporting unfunded mandate through the budget process.

2010 General Assembly: Funding for tobacco treatment included in budget bill.

2010 Post-session: Advocates offer support to Kentucky Department for Medicaid Services for implementation & public awareness of the benefit. The benefit includes all recommended medications***, a 30-minute assessment/counseling visit by a covered healthcare provider, and use of quitline, online, or health department classes for ongoing cessation support.

* The exception to this was Passport Health Plan, a regional Medicaid provider in Louisville, which provided a cessation benefit resulting in a 51% cessation rate among Medicaid participants.

** National trend to increase taxes on tobacco products after release of an IOM report Ending the Tobacco Problem: A Blueprint for the Nation

*** Fiore, M, et al. Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence Clinical Practice Guidelines: 2008 Update



Lessons Learned

- Stay focused on a clear goal.
- Be prepared to alter strategies based on political realities.
- Seize windows of opportunity.
- Maintain a broad-based coalition to advocate, provide data, and contact legislators.
- Work closely with state agencies and elected officials.
- Use the media and incorporate a variety of advocacy perspectives.
- Maintain a clear and effective, real-time communication plan.
- Be persistent!

Medicaid Smoking Cessation Coalition Members:

Advocacy Action Network
American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
American Lung Assoc. in KY
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
Catholic Conference of KY
Covering KY Kids & Families
KY Academy of Family Physicians
KY Chamber of Commerce
KY Equal Justice Center
KY Health Departments Association

KY Hospital Association
KY Medical Association
KY Nurses Association
KY Public Health Association
KY Pharmacists Association
KY Voices for Health
KY Youth Advocates
March of Dimes, KY Chapter
Mental Health American of KY
NAMI Kentucky