

## Medicaid Smoking Cessation Coalition

- Advocacy Action Network
- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
- American Lung Association in Kentucky
- Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
- Catholic Conference of Kentucky
- Covering Kentucky Kids & Families
- Kentucky Academy of Family Physicians
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Kentucky Equal Justice Center
- Kentucky Health Departments Association, Inc.
- Kentucky Hospital Association
- Kentucky Medical Association
- Kentucky Nurses Association
- Kentucky Public Health Association
- Kentucky Pharmacists Association
- Kentucky Voices for Health
- Kentucky Youth Advocates
- March of Dimes, Kentucky Chapter
- Mental Health American of Kentucky
- NAMI Kentucky

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Amy Barkley, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (502/777-8148)  
Tonya Chang, American Heart Association (859/492-2882)

## Kentucky Implements Medicaid Smoking Cessation Benefit

*Health & Business Advocates Applaud Governor and General Assembly*

FRANKFORT, KY (October 4, 2010) – The Commonwealth of Kentucky has taken a major step in improving the health of all Kentuckians by implementing a comprehensive smoking cessation benefit for Medicaid recipients. Smokers on Kentucky Medicaid now have a proven and effective way to quit smoking thanks to Governor Steve Beshear, the Cabinet for Health & Family Services and the Kentucky General Assembly.

This comprehensive benefit will help thousands of Kentuckians quit smoking, saving lives and taxpayer dollars. Health and business advocates from across the state pushed hard for this benefit and credit Governor Beshear, the Cabinet and the General Assembly for taking this important step.

Through the benefit, which is modeled after Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, Kentuckians on Medicaid will be eligible to receive counseling, doctor visits and prescription drug therapies to help end their smoking addiction.

“The Governor, the Cabinet and the General Assembly did the right thing by working together to create a healthier Kentucky,” said Amy Barkley of the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. “2010 presented a very difficult budget situation, but providing smoking cessation coverage for Kentucky Medicaid recipients is a good economic and health policy. It benefits individual patients and Kentucky businesses while helping to improve the long-term financial prosperity of the state.”

Tobacco use disproportionately affects the poor and uneducated. According to the CDC, smoking costs the Kentucky Medicaid program nearly \$500 million per year. Fortunately, numerous studies show that motivated people can successfully quit through a combination of smoking cessation medications and counseling by a health care provider.

“Kentucky lawmakers correctly recognize that many people want to quit smoking and simply need help to do so,” said Tonya Chang of the American Heart Association. “This is precisely the forward-thinking approach needed to turn around Kentucky’s poor health statistics and help lower healthcare costs.”

The Kentucky Medicaid Smoking Cessation Coalition urges all those on Medicaid who smoke to consider this benefit as an opportunity to quit smoking once and for all and lead a healthier life.

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*The Kentucky Medicaid Smoking Cessation Coalition includes the following members: Advocacy Action Network, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Kentucky, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, Catholic Conference of Kentucky, Kentucky Academy of Family Physicians, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Kentucky Equal Justice Center, Kentucky Health Departments Association, Inc., Kentucky Hospital Association, Kentucky Medical Association, Kentucky Nurses Association, Kentucky Public Health Association, Kentucky Pharmacists Association, Kentucky Voices for Health, Kentucky Youth Advocates, March of Dimes, Kentucky Chapter, Mental Health American of Kentucky, NAMI Kentucky*