

# Highlights in Tobacco Control

## A Newsletter for Texas Communities

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### The Texas Tobacco Quitline Help Is Just A Phone Call Away



1-877-YES-QUIT  
1-877-937-7848

Tobacco quitlines are a unique way to support smokers trying to stop smoking. In Texas, the American Cancer Society (ACS) operates a toll-free number for adults seeking information, advice, and counseling about tobacco cessation. The Texas Department of Health funds the tobacco quitline with tobacco settlement proceeds.

The quitline service is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Help is available in both English and Spanish.

During its first year, the Texas Tobacco Quitline logged over 7,500 calls. Over 9,000 people could call the Quitline for help during 2002.

If callers are ready to quit smoking within the next 30 days, they are scheduled for a full counseling session.

They also are given referrals for tobacco cessation support. This may include information on nicotine replacement products (gum, patch) and classes or groups to assist with the efforts to quit.

Last of all, callers who are ready to stop using tobacco are mailed a packet of printed materials that reinforce the cessation messages.

and provide guidance throughout the process of quitting-tobacco.

Those callers who are not ready to stop smoking within the next 30 days receive a brief counseling session. In addition, they are mailed printed materials that encourage the caller to stop using tobacco.

The Texas Tobacco Quitline is:

- ♦ free, flexible, and convenient,
- ♦ individualized for each caller's needs,
- ♦ personal and private,
- ♦ especially useful in rural areas or anywhere that counseling services are limited.

Alliance for a Tobacco-free Texas  
*Live it. Breathe it.*

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## Who Calls the Quitline in Texas?

In January 2002, 611 people used the Texas Tobacco Quitline. So who are these callers?

First, more of them were female than male. Typically, more women than men use tobacco quitline services, and this was true for Texas callers.

The average age of all callers was 38.5 years. Exactly half of these individuals had some high school education or a high school diploma. Almost half (43%) had some college education or were college graduates.

Marital status was balanced between single or divorced (49%) and married or separated (48%). Most callers were Anglo (62%), while fewer were Hispanic (19%) and African-American (15%).

Two-thirds (66%) of the Quitline callers heard about the service from tv, radio, newspaper, or billboard ads.

Some callers (4%) were referred by a health care provider, while others (8%) were referred by friends, relatives, employers, or the ACS website.

## Commitment to Special Populations

Texas Tobacco Quitline counseling services are matched to the specific and personal needs of each smoker who seeks help at 1-877-YES-QUIT. This ability to tailor cessation messages becomes especially important when callers are members of special or underserved populations.

Texas Tobacco Quitline counselors are respectful of each caller's cultural, religious, socioeconomic, and educational background. Counselors also are attentive to literacy levels when sending out printed materials.

During the first year of the Texas Tobacco Quitline's operation, there were no real differences in 3-month quit rates among African-American, Hispanic, and Anglo callers. This shows that the counseling being provided was equally effective, regardless of the caller's ethnicity.

Due to privacy issues, the Texas Quitline does not ask callers if they are Medicaid recipients. However, this particular special-population group should be encouraged to use the Quitline's services.

Smoking prevalence is high among Medicaid recipients, who are strongly affected by tobacco and tobacco-related disease and disability. Medicaid recipients have approximately 50% greater smoking rates than the overall US population.<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, treatment for tobacco use is a highly cost-effective preventive measure.<sup>2</sup> The Texas Tobacco Quitline is an excellent resource for Medicaid recipients in Texas, and for other tobacco users across the state.

<sup>1</sup> State Medicaid Coverage for Tobacco Dependence Treatments – United States, 1998 – 2000. CDC, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Tobacco Information and Prevention Source.

<sup>2</sup> Fiore, M., Bailey, W., Cohen, S. Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: Clinical Practice Guideline. USDHHS, 2000.