



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Mexico offers a comprehensive tobacco cessation program for Medicaid recipients who want to quit smoking

SANTA FE – New Mexico Human Services Department (NMHSD) would like to remind our Medicaid recipients of the comprehensive tobacco cessation program that provides those willing an opportunity to quit smoking, vaping or other tobacco use.

“Medicaid enrollees have nearly double the smoking rates of the general population, and smoking-related medical costs are responsible for 11 percent of Medicaid costs nationally,” said Nicole Comeaux, state Medicaid director. “The tobacco cessation we’re offering now will not only benefit those who want to quit tobacco use and live a healthy life, but also have long-term savings for the Medicaid program. Over 70 percent of those who smoke report wanting to quit and we want to make sure they have access to the right tools to make them successful.”

According to NIH, National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Trends Progress Report, which summarizes our nation’s progress against cancer in relation to Healthy People targets set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services, tobacco smoking often starts during adolescence but can have detrimental health effects throughout life. Nearly 90 percent of adult daily smokers in the United States began smoking by age 18 and 98 percent first smoked by age 26. Initiation of smoking during adolescence is closely associated with persistent smoking in adulthood and with the many adverse health effects associated with chronic smoking.¹

Senate Bill 131 ***Tobacco Licensing and Tobacco and E-Cigarette Sales***, (Senator Lopez & Representative Thomson) creates a regulatory licensing system for the manufacturing, distribution and retail of tobacco products, to be administered by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Division at the Regulation and Licensing Department, and raises the legal age for purchases of e-cigarette and other tobacco products from 18 to 21, aligning New Mexico law with recently enacted federal law, in addition to creating criminal penalties for those who sell these products to purchasers under the age of 21.

“Health care costs in smokers are 20 percent higher than non-smokers, which raises commercial and other insurance rates accordingly. Tobacco products are addictive and unhealthy, but they’re particularly dangerous for adolescents. I support Senate Bill 131,” said David R. Scrase, M.D., cabinet secretary for New Mexico Human Services Division. “It is our goal to ensure that all New Mexicans have the necessary resources to quit smoking, and as policy makers we must do what we can to help our kids from getting addicted.”

All three of our accountable managed care organization partners – Western Sky, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Presbyterian – offer tobacco cessation medications and counseling services under this program for Medicaid recipients enrolled with them.

¹ Cancer Trends Progress Report, National Cancer Institute, NIH, DHHS, Bethesda, MD, February 2019, <https://progressreport.cancer.gov>

The smoking cessation coverage includes medications such as: varenicline (CHANTIX®), bupropion, nicotine lozenges, nicotine patches, nicotine gums, nicotine sprays and nicotine inhalers. It also includes individual counseling, group counseling, and a Cessation Quitline. The services do not require prior authorization and do not have any limits on the length of treatment or quit attempts per year. The program also allows participants to try multiple treatments and does not impose any requirement to enroll into counseling.

“This is one of the most comprehensive approaches I have seen to help Medicaid enrollees quit smoking and other tobacco use,” said Dr. Robert Taylor, President of Board of Directors for the American Heart Association in Albuquerque. “People should realize that health benefits of smoking cessation are almost immediate. There is improvement in heart rate and blood pressure within the hour of smoking cessation. Improvements in circulation and breathing occur within weeks. The risk of heart disease, stroke and lung cancer drop within the year. Therefore, it is never too late to stop smoking.”

According to the American Heart Association some benefits of quitting:

- You’ll be able to exercise or be physically active with less shortness of breath.
- Your clothes, hair, body, car and home will smell better.
- Your sense of taste and smell will return to normal.
- The stains on your teeth and fingernails will start to fade.
- You’ll save hundreds or thousands of dollars a year. Find out how much with this [savings calculator](#) (link opens in new window).

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If you’re a Medicaid recipient who smokes and would like help quitting, please call one of these numbers:

MCO	Quit Line Name	Quit Line Number
Western Sky	Healthy Solutions for Life	1-833-706-2880
Blue Cross Blue Shield	Tobacco Cessation Program	1-877-232-5518
Presbyterian	Presbyterian Clickotine	1-866-861-7441

According to the American Heart Association and the U.S. surgeon general, this is how your body starts to recover when you quit smoking:

- In the first 20 minutes: your blood pressure and heart rate recover from the nicotine-induced spikes.
- After 12 hours: the carbon monoxide levels in your blood return to normal.
- After two weeks: your circulation and lung function begin to improve.
- After one to nine months: clear and deeper breathing gradually returns; you have less coughing and shortness of breath; you regain the ability to cough productively instead of hacking, which cleans your lungs and reduce your risk of infection.
- After one year: your risk of coronary heart disease is reduced by 50 percent.
- After 5 years: Your risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, and bladder are cut in half. Your risk of cervical cancer and stroke return to normal.
- After 10 years: You are half as likely to die from lung cancer. Your risk of larynx or pancreatic cancer decreases.
- After 15 years: your risk of coronary heart disease is the same as a non-smoker’s.

The Human Services Department provides services and benefits to more than 1 million New Mexicans through several programs including: the Medicaid Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Program, and several Behavioral Health Services.

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