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New York State's Medicaid Program Expands Coverage of Smoking Cessation Counseling

Effective April 1, 2011, Medicaid coverage of smoking cessation counseling (SCC) will be expanded to include ALL Medicaid enrollees. Each Medicaid enrollee will be allowed 6 counseling sessions during any 12 continuous months which must be provided on a face-to-face basis. Smoking cessation counseling complements the use of prescription and non-prescription smoking cessation products. These products are also covered by Medicaid.

“This expansion of cessation coverage is a giant step forward in the effort to prevent and reduce tobacco caused disease,” said Irwin Berlin, M.D., board chair of the American Lung Association in New York, “This is one of the most positive and significant steps we can take to improve the health of New Yorkers because we know that comprehensive smoking cessation coverage – which includes counseling and medication – works. All New Yorkers deserve to be able to access cessation treatment quickly and easily.”

Medicaid is government-funded health care that pays the medical expenses of people who are unable to pay some or all of their own medical expenses.

This expansion of Medicaid coverage is important for several reasons, including:

- Tobacco use costs each New York State household an average of \$842 annually in local, state and federal taxes to cover tobacco-caused costs to government.
- Tobacco use costs New York State over \$8 billion per year in smoking-related healthcare costs.
- According to the 2009 New York Adult Tobacco Survey, 48 percent of all smokers are on Medicaid or have no health insurance.
- While approximately 18 percent of New Yorkers smoke, 30 percent of Medicaid recipients are smokers.
- Smokers on Medicaid were more likely to have attempted to quit smoking in the past year than those with private insurance. However, the smokers on Medicaid were less likely to quit smoking successfully than those with private health insurance.
- Tobacco use and dependence is the leading preventable cause of morbidity and mortality in New York. Quitting smoking is the best thing smokers can do for their health.

The overall prevalence of smoking in New York has fallen by about 22 percent since 2001, but cigarette use still results in an estimated 25,500 deaths in New York each year. Additionally, despite the statewide decline, tobacco use remains higher among certain population groups.

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A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report (“Cigarette Smoking – United States, 1965 – 2008”) found that, “In addition to racial/ethnic disparities in cigarette smoking, other groups have higher prevalence of cigarette smoking, with higher use reported among persons with low socioeconomic status; persons with histories of mental health and substance abuse conditions ...”

“Addressing health disparities is an important part of improving the overall health of the American public,” said Rita Warm, Director of Ambulatory Services at Saint Joseph's Medical Center Family Health Center, “It's critical that we assist Medicaid recipients with their quit smoking attempts. Not only are Medicaid recipients more likely to be smokers, but they also are less likely to receive cessation assistance.”

“The expansion of Medicaid's services to include smoking cessation counseling will help New Yorkers,” said Didi Raxworthy, Director of POW'R Tobacco Cessation Center, “Counseling and medication are each effective when used by themselves for treating tobacco dependence. However, the combination of counseling and medication is more effective than either alone. So, clinicians should encourage all individuals making a quit attempt to use both counseling and medication. And Medicaid's expanded services will make this approach more affordable for many people.”

POW'R Tobacco Cessation Center works with clinicians and physicians throughout the counties of Putnam, Orange, Westchester and Rockland. The work of POW'R in the past year include the following: Westchester Medical Center, now a Tobacco Free Campus, and initiating smoking cessation support for all patients twelve years and older; St. Joseph's Hospital Medical Family Health Center in Yonkers; White Plains Hospital and its Family Clinic; Helen Hayes Hospital; Middletown Community Health Center and Orange Regional Medical Center to name a few.

POW'R Tobacco Cessation Center is one of 19 Cessation across New York State. It is funded through a grant from the New York State Department of Health Tobacco Control Program and is a program of the American Lung Association in New York. Its mission is to support Physicians and clinicians to help their patients to quit smoking. POW'R supports this most important team of people with free education materials, free training on the [Clinical Practice Guidelines for Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence, 2008 Update](#), and other free services.

Note: *Experts from POW'R Tobacco Cessation are available to discuss the effects of tobacco use. Contact Didi Raxworthy at 914 830-4112 or draxworthy@alany.org to schedule an interview.*

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