



## STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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### **New Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline In High Demand**

*New Workplace Smoking Law Helps Generate 2,500 Calls Within First Six Weeks*

**OKLAHOMA CITY** – The Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust announced today that approximately 2,500 Oklahomans have called the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline within its first six weeks of operation, greatly exceeding initial projections. The toll-free Helpline, 1-866-PITCH 'EM (1-866-748-2436), is funded by the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust.

Dr. Robert McCaffree, M.D., chair of the fund's board of directors and a practicing pulmonary physician at the OU Health Sciences Center, said that there are probably several major reasons for the Helpline's popularity. "We've known for years that the majority of tobacco users in Oklahoma want to quit. This huge response confirms that many just need a little help," McCaffree said. "Also, the Helpline came just in time for many smokers who are attempting to quit now because of Oklahoma's new smoke-free workplace law." The Oklahoma Smoking in Public Places and Indoor Workplaces Act became effective September 1.

The Helpline services are free of charge and provide assistance to tobacco users, friends and family interested in helping their loved ones quit, and health care professionals who may need specific information on medications and services to help their patients quit. All callers receive information and materials, or "quit kits" that address their specific concerns and some may be referred to a local cessation program.

Callers interested in quitting can enroll in the Helpline's intensive telephone-based program that consists of a series of five counseling calls with the same professional specialist over a three to four month period. The timing of the calls is based upon the caller's quit date and availability. Tobacco Cessation Specialists work with each caller to determine their readiness to quit and assist them in developing a quit plan that is tailored to their individual needs. Specialists also help callers identify and access benefits that may be available to them through their employer, Medicaid, or other insurance provider to cover the cost of cessation medications, such as nicotine patches, gum, or Zyban.

The Helpline's "live" hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday, from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays and from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekends. Helpline staff will return any messages left after hours. For more information on the Helpline please see: <http://www.tobaccosettlement.state.ok.us/programs/helpline.html>.

"As more and more Oklahoma workplaces become smoke-free, employees wanting to quit smoking will appreciate all the support they can get," said McCaffree. "We encourage all Oklahoma employers to inform their workers of this free Helpline service."

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