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## Through With Chew Week, Feb. 16-22, Encourages Oklahomans To Quit Smokeless Tobacco

As more facilities, businesses and campuses pass health-focused policies to restrict smoking, tobacco companies have shifted their promotional focus from cigarettes to smokeless tobacco.

Also referred to as chew, snuff, snus and dip, smokeless tobacco products are being marketed as “less harmful” alternatives to cigarettes. Through With Chew Week, Feb. 16-22, calls attention to smokeless tobacco use, highlighting the fact that no tobacco products are safe.

“While cigarettes are the most lethal form of tobacco, smokeless tobacco products are not a safe alternative to smoking,” said Coordinator Marcey Ford, Tobacco-Free LeFlore County. “Smokeless tobacco is addictive and causes serious health problems, including oral, esophageal and pancreatic cancers.”

In fact, smokeless tobacco users have an 80 percent higher risk of developing oral cancer and a 60 percent higher risk of developing pancreatic and esophageal cancer than non-tobacco users. According to the 2014 Surgeon General’s Report, there has been a steady increase in smokeless tobacco use since 2004. Several contributing factors include increased smokeless tobacco advertising expenditures, the introduction of a wide variety of new smokeless products and flavors at low price points, and marketing messages intended to specifically appeal to current or former smokers.

“Smokeless tobacco use still remains a threat to Oklahomans, as our state ranks 45th in smokeless tobacco use according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control,” said Marcey. “Through with Chew Week is the perfect opportunity for Oklahomans to encourage friends and loved ones to quit tobacco use.”

Oklahomans with a desire to quit using smokeless tobacco, or any other form of tobacco, can contact the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline to receive FREE services. Through the Helpline, tobacco users can receive free coaching with highly-trained quit coaches, a personalized quit plan, specialized materials and resources to become tobacco free.

Most callers enrolled in the program will also receive free patches, gum or lozenges. To get started with the Helpline, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit [OKhelpline.com](http://OKhelpline.com). Services are also available in Spanish by contact 1-855-DEJELLO-YA (1-855-335-3569).

“Tobacco dependence is a chronic, relapsing condition,” said Ms. Ford. “Even if you’ve tried to quit before, it is important to never, ever give up!”

The Helpline is funded by Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET), the Oklahoma State Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Oklahoma Employees Group Insurance Board and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. More than 250,000 Oklahomans have accessed the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline by phone or online for quit coaching assistance since the free service began in 2003. For more information about the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, visit [OKhelpline.com](http://OKhelpline.com).

ABOUT THE TOBACCO-FREE LEFLORE COUNTY—TLC is a program of LeFlore County Coalition for Healthy Living & LeFlore County Youth Services and a grantee of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust serving LeFlore County and promoting smoke-free environments, tobacco cessation and tobacco prevention. For more information about TLC contact Marcey Ford at 918-647-4196.