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Transcript Staff

Quitting smoking resolutions get help

The Norman Transcript

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Oklahomans in Cleveland County resolving to quit using tobacco this New Year now have the support of expanded services from the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline.

"We want to make sure those who want to quit using tobacco in Cleveland County have all the tools necessary to be successful," said Gail Hilty, chairperson of the Cleveland County Turning Point/Tobacco Free Cleveland County. "This expanded service is just one more way to help people quit tobacco for good."

In addition to free coaching sessions available over the phone at 1-800-Quit-Now (1-800-784-8669), participants can access a 24-hour-a-day interactive Web site with personal tracking tools and discussion forums.

People calling the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline receive free coaching sessions with professional Quit Coaches that focus on developing a quit plan tailored to participants' personal needs and support in sticking with the plan, including up to four follow-up coaching sessions. Now, between coaching sessions, those trying to quit are also encouraged to access the Web site to get extra support when they need it.

Web Coach allows participants to build a personal Quit Plan and complete self-assessment exercises. Responses are shared in real time with a Quit Coach, who uses the information to prepare for the next coaching session.

Participants also can interact with each other and Quit Coaches in the Web Coach Discussion Forums. These forums allow participants to learn behavioral tips from Quit Coaches and from others who are quitting or who have successfully quit in the past. Tailored motivational and educational e-mails are sent to participants throughout the program.

For a limited time, Oklahoma residents who call the Helpline for coaching will also receive a free two-week starter kit of nicotine patches or gum mailed directly to their homes. This combination of cessation medications and coaching more than double the chances of a successful quit attempt, proponents say.

"Quitting smoking doesn't happen overnight," Hilty said. "It takes a strong commitment and focused effort. We want those in our community who want to quit tobacco to know they don't have to go it alone. Now they'll have the help of their Quit Coaches, nicotine patches or gum, and a national network of support from other participants at their fingertips."

For those who like a group setting cessation service, Norman Regional Health System will offer the American Lung Association Freedom From Smoking Classes starting Jan. 21. For the community, it costs \$75 and scholarships are available. For registration, call the Helpline at 440-8802. For further information, call Jerry Deming, 307-3175.

Serving more than 50,000 Oklahomans since 2003, the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline is funded by the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, with assistance from state tobacco tax funds made available through the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline's hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week, and staff will return any messages left after hours.

For more information about the Helpline, go to: www.ok.gov/tset/Programs/Helpline.html.

For more information about quitting go to: www.smokefree.gov.