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Dear Provider:

You play such a trusted role in your patients' health. Smoking is one of the hardest addictions to treat because many patients think they should be able to quit on their own. A small percentage can quit cold turkey, but most Vermonters need assistance. We are writing to thank you for your important work to help those on Medicaid to quit and to share new resources and policies.

The most effective guidance to help patients on their path to quitting is providing brief or intermediate counseling in clinic, referring to a local tobacco treatment specialist or Vermont's Quitline and prescribing nicotine replacement therapy, dual use (gum or lozenge and patch) and Chantix.

This fall, the Vermont Department of Health is investing in TV ads that message "Medicaid has you covered." Medicaid members smoke at a significantly higher rate than non-Medicaid Vermonters. Yet, data suggests many Vermonters remain unaware of the free benefits available through Medicaid and the department's 802Quits program. Advertising, accessible benefits and providers engaging about tobacco use are shown to motivate smokers to make a quit attempt.

Attached are samples of posters, rack cards and a referral fax form to help address tobacco use among patients. For print versions, contact tobaccovt@vermont.gov. It is easier than ever to help patients quit:

Ask about tobacco use at every visit. By asking, patients know it's important to their health. It may be frustrating to encounter resistance from patients who smoke, and it may seem they are not listening, but they are. Studies show it can take multiple tries to quit successfully so your voice is key in motivating their quit attempt. Patients learn with each attempt and can try different approaches to see what works for them. Information on quitting by phone, online, with the help of text support or in person with a local coach can be found at 802quits.org.

Provide counseling. The more sessions per a patient's quit attempt, the higher the chance of success. Reimbursement is available for brief (3 – 10 min) and intermediate (over 10 min) counseling.

Prescribe Medicaid-preferred quit medications. There are 7 medications free to members, including bupropion and Chantix. Many generic patches, gums, lozenges are now available without prior authorization or limits in use. Medicaid members do not have a co-pay for cessation medications.

Refer your patients to 802Quits for support between office visits – all at no cost. Coaches at Vermont’s Quitline, 1-800-QUIT NOW, are available 24/7 and offer 5 counseling sessions (9 for pregnant) and text support. Our online program provides 24/7 access to quit help and in-person classes through VT Quit Partners can be accessed separately or together with phone counseling.

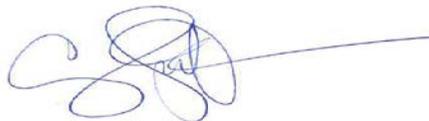
Visit our refreshed 802quits.org provider pages for additional resources and materials.

There are 83,000 Vermonters who smoke, yet 70% want to quit at any one time. You play such an important role in motivating patients who smoke to think about quitting just by asking at every visit and providing brief advice that includes a referral to 802quits.org.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Levine, MD
Commissioner
Vermont Department of Health



Cory Gustafson
Commissioner
Vermont Department of Vermont Health Access