

Sample Letter Employer Associations to Employers

Dear <<Employer>>,

We all know that smoking is harmful to your health, but it also costs employers \$193 billion in health care costs and lost productivity every year.¹


The recent passage of <<city/state>>'s <<policy change>> may encourage your employees to try to quit smoking. Providing assistance to those employees motivated to stop smoking can be positive for overall morale, increase productivity, and reduce medical costs for your health plan. As an employer, there are several steps you can take to increase your employees' likelihood of success.

1. Ensure that your health plan covers smoking cessation. According to the National Business Group on Health (NBGH), 70 percent of employers feel that offering smoking cessation benefits is the most effective way to encourage employees to quit smoking, but only two percent cover all the components of a comprehensive smoking cessation benefit as outlined by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.² Components of a comprehensive benefit include:³

- Cover at least four counseling sessions of at least 30 minutes each, including telephone and individual counseling sessions
- Cover FDA-approved smoking cessation prescription medications and over-the-counter treatments
- Offer counseling and medication coverage for at least two smoking cessation attempts per year
- Eliminate or minimize co-pays or deductibles for counseling and medications

2. Educate employees about the smoking cessation program provided by your health plan.

The <<policy change>> is a natural opportunity to educate employees who may be unaware of, or reluctant to ask about, your company's smoking cessation coverage. Seize this opportunity by creating letters, sending e-mails or posting information around the office encouraging employees to make a quit smoking attempt using the coverage provided by your company's health plan.

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- 3. Encourage employees and their family members to create a quit smoking plan with their doctor.** The US Public Health Service Clinical Practice Guideline, *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence*, defines tobacco dependence as a chronic disease requiring repeated intervention and multiple quit attempts.⁴ A physician or other health professional is well positioned to recommend the best treatment option for someone trying to quit smoking. When smokers try to quit without treatment or counseling, only three to five percent stay quit for up to one year.⁵
 - 4. Remain supportive.** Not everyone will be motivated to stop smoking right away, and some may not succeed. It is important to remain supportive and encourage employees to give it another try.

Additional employer-specific recommendations can be found in the NBGH Purchaser's Guide to Clinical Preventive Services, www.businessgrouphealth.org/benefitsttopics/topics/purchasers/fullguide.pdf. For more information for your employees about quitting smoking, please visit www.lungusa.com, www.cdc.gov/tobacco, or www.mytimetoquit.com.

Sincerely,

<<Name>>, <<Title>>

<<Organization>>

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses – United States, 2000-2004. MMWR, November 14, 2008 / 57(45):1226-1228. www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5745a3.htm. Accessed February 20, 2009.

² Finch R. National Business Group on Health. Smokers in the workplace: exploring employers' understanding and perceptions of the business impact of smoking. www.businessgrouphealth.org/meetings/forum2007/presentations/plenary/plenary6.pdf. Accessed August 26, 2008.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coverage for tobacco use cessation treatments: why, what, and how. Available at: www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/cessation/00_pdfs/reimbursement_brochure.pdf. Accessed August 28, 2007.

⁴ Fiore MC, Jaen CR, Baker TB, et al. Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update. Clinical Practice Guideline. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service. May 2008.

⁵ Hughes JR, Keeley J, Naud S. Shape of the relapse curve and long-term abstinence among untreated smokers. *Addiction*. 2004;99:29-38.