

Tobacco Cessation Electronic Referral Systems

According to the United States (U.S.) Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable illness and death in the U.S. It is imperative that health care organizations and providers implement effective procedures to connect tobacco users to quality cessation services in order to prevent and reduce the death and disability related to tobacco use. One approach is use electronic health record systems to refer directly to quitline services. Research shows that tobacco users who use quitline services are more likely to successfully quit than those who try to quit on their own.

Nevada Quitline Service

In Nevada, quitline services are provided by National Jewish Health, whose tobacco cessation program shows better results than many national standards. The telephone-based cessation program offers services tailored to individual smokers' needs. Trained coaches work closely with individuals to develop a personalized quit plan, and teach coping skills needed to quit tobacco and remain tobacco-free. The program consists of:

- the multilingual quitline call center open 7 days/week
- proactive, confidential, one-on-one coaching sessions
- web support through www.nevadatobaccoquitline.com
- tailored print materials, text, email and mobile app support
- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) including patches, gum and lozenges shipped directly to eligible participants (when available)
- specialized programs available for pregnant & postpartum women, and American Indian commercial tobacco users

Electronic Referrals (eReferrals)

The eReferral process for smoking cessation referrals helps providers overcome the manual and cumbersome process of on-line and fax referrals and takes advantage of electronic health record (EHR) technology. The program creates ease in both referring patients and receiving feedback information on a patient's progress through their cessation effort. It also integrates tobacco cessation into routine clinical care and enables health systems to measure the implementation of changes and the impact of these changes on outcomes in affected patient populations.

An eReferrals sends secure, two-way communication between a healthcare provider and the quitline through the patient's EHR. Providers receive progress updates using the same system, allowing the provider to stay abreast of their patient's progress towards quitting tobacco. All messages sent through eReferral are HIPAA-compliant to protect patient privacy.

In addition to faster referrals, using the EHR improves data quality and increases the likelihood of a successful referral to a qualified tobacco cessation provider. The benefits of transitioning to an eReferral system include developing a sustainable, cost-effective system that has possibilities of reaching higher numbers of patients and ultimately, improve patient outcomes.

If you are interested in exploring an eReferral for your clinical setting in Washoe County, the Washoe County Health District's Chronic Disease Prevention Program (CDPP) is offering technical assistance. The CDPP also has limited funding to help cover the costs of putting an eReferral system in place. Please reach out to Kelli Goatley-Seals kseals@washoecounty.us or 775-328-6160 to learn more.