

UPGRADED QUIT NOW TOOL

Rolled Out at Perfect Time

By Anthony Schoettle

A new \$2 per pack tax increase on cigarettes is certain to drive more Hoosiers to want to stop using tobacco, and the newly revamped Quit Now Tool is available to allow employers to support their employees' efforts to do so.

The Quit Now Tool was first introduced in 2012 by the Wellness Council of Indiana (WCI) and built as a complement to the services of 1-800-QUITNOW, Indiana's Tobacco Quitline.

The WCI, which operates under the umbrella of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, launched the original version of the Quit Now Tool after hearing from employers who wanted to support their employees' tobacco cessation efforts but lacked the tools and language to do so effectively.

The refreshed version of the Quit Now Tool was released in late June, which was perfect timing, according to stakeholders.

The new average price per pack of cigarettes in Indiana is now \$11. The tax hike also applies to vapes and chewing tobacco.

The state estimates nearly 40,000 Hoosiers will look to stop using tobacco in the months after the July 1 tax increase.

"Cost is one of the most effective motivators for quitting (tobacco and nicotine), and research shows that tax increases significantly drive quit attempts," says WCI Executive Director Ashley O'Rourke. "The World Health Organization estimates that for every 10% increase in the price of tobacco, consumption drops by about 4% in high-income countries.

Getting on the right path

The new Quit Now Tool, an easy-to-use, employer-facing resource, is designed to serve as a tobacco policy management tool for employers and an awareness, education and engagement tool for employees. It includes customizable communication assets, best practice guidance and referral strategies that make it simple for human resources professionals and wellness leaders to take action.

"Whether an employer is launching a new initiative or enhancing existing efforts, the Quit Now Tool provides everything needed to meet this moment with confidence," O'Rourke stresses.

Access to the Quit Now Tool requires an active WCI membership, which starts at

\$300 for small businesses, with a maximum of \$3,000 for large companies.

The Quit Now Tool was created to address a set of common concerns for employers. "They wanted to support employees in quitting tobacco but didn't know what resources were available, how to communicate effectively or how to build a program from scratch," O'Rourke explains. "As connectors and conveners, WCI stepped in to fill that gap – offering a ready-to-use tool that promotes cessation in a supportive, accessible way and connects employers directly to proven resources."

In 2012, the Quit Now Tool was one of the first tools of its kind and is still one of the most inexpensive to use. In addition, it's Indiana specific. "It's a unique Hoosier-employer experience, with Indiana data and connections to a vast catalog of Hoosier-specific resources," O'Rourke expounds.

Why it matters

Aside from the obvious health benefits of quitting tobacco use, there's a real economic benefit too for the state and its businesses.

"For businesses, tobacco use drives up health costs and reduces productivity," O'Rourke states. "Indiana employers already pay more per worker on healthcare than the national average, so addressing preventable risks like tobacco is key. A tobacco-free workforce is associated with lower healthcare spending, fewer sick days and better morale."

Smoking-related illness in the United States costs more than \$300 billion each year, including nearly \$170 billion in direct medical care for adults and more than \$156 billion in lost productivity, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

In Indiana, smoking costs employers more than \$3.4 billion annually in healthcare expenses and lost productivity, according to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

Of course, there's an even bigger cost.

"When you look at the toll on death and disease ... tobacco use in Indiana costs us more than 11,000 lives every year," says Miranda Spitznagle, director, tobacco prevention and cessation at the Indiana Department of Health. "And for every death that we experience due



"Initiatives like the Quit Now tool provide a great resource for employers who are trying to help their employees tackle their tobacco addiction," emphasizes Miranda Spitznagle of the Indiana Department of Health.

to tobacco use, there's another 30 Hoosiers who are living with a chronic health condition or disability due to their tobacco use.”

Improved platform offers help

More than 700,000 Hoosiers still use tobacco, and 80% of Indiana tobacco users want to quit, according to Quit Now Indiana. “This shows that with the right encouragement and tools, most tobacco users in the state are ready for change,” O’Rourke suggests.

That’s where an aid like the Quit Now Tool can make a difference.

“For individuals, the tool helps normalize quit attempts and connects them to free, evidence-based support,” O’Rourke shares.

The upgrade launched in June strengthens and modernizes the Quit Now Tool to better reflect today’s environment and employer needs. It now includes a streamlined layout, enhanced features tailored for human resource departments, wellness leaders and employees, as well as fresh, stigma-free messaging.

Among other key additions are more visuals – including videos, and updated data



While usage rates for traditional tobacco products are starting to decline, there’s been a recent increase in vaping, which has health officials concerned.

and reporting mechanisms for employers.

And there’s flexibility. The program is cadenced to give employees using the Quit Now Tool time to soak in the information. The tool also gives employers the opportunity to track their employees’ progress so they can offer the appropriate support along the quit journey.

“With the state’s tobacco tax having increased

on July 1, we view this as a key time and opportunity for employers to take meaningful action – and the upgraded tool gives them the confidence and resources to do just that,” O’Rourke maintains. “The Quit Now Tool enables employers to meet that increased demand with real support, delivered in a way that is compassionate, practical and immediate.”

RESOURCES: Ashley O’Rourke, Wellness Council of Indiana, at www.wellnessindiana.org | Miranda Spitznagle, Indiana Department of Health, at www.in.gov/health



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