

Improving Kentucky's Access to Smoking Cessation Coverage

General Message

Physicians play a critical role in helping smokers gain knowledge of and access to proven tools to help them quit, including counseling and medications. Many smokers who want to quit unfortunately face barriers to these treatments. The KMA supports legislation requiring Kentucky health plans, both commercial and Medicaid, to cover all FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)-recommended tobacco cessation services, including counseling, without harmful barriers to access.

If Kentuckians want to quit smoking, we should do everything we can to help them.

The ISSUE – Kentucky's high smoking rates lead to increased instances of preventable disease and premature death. But many Kentuckians are often denied barrier-free access to proven tobacco cessation treatments by health plans.

Supporting Points:

- At 26 percent, Kentucky's statewide smoking rate ranks among the highest in the nation and contributes to nearly 9,000 deaths per year.
- Many Kentucky insurers do not cover all USPSTF-recommended treatments or impose harmful barriers that impede access to these critical tools.

The PROBLEM – Many Kentucky commercial plans and Medicaid managed care organizations either fail to cover FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and USPSTF-recommended cessation services or, when they do provide coverage, impose complicated barriers to access such as step therapy, cost-sharing and prior authorization when they do. This ultimately means patients may be denied or delayed access to the treatments their provider prescribes.

Supporting Points:

- It is important that the patient/provider relationship is protected so patients have access to the treatments their providers prescribe without harmful barriers.
- Inconsistencies in coverage and plan benefits cause confusion among providers and patients about the availability of treatments.
- This confusion means fewer Kentuckians are utilizing tobacco cessation benefits.

The SOLUTION – Legislation is needed to require all Kentucky health plans – both commercial and Medicaid – to provide barrier-free coverage for all FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and USPSTF-recommended tobacco cessation services. Doing so will not only save lives but will also save valuable taxpayer dollars.

Supporting Points:

- Providing coverage for all evidence-based tobacco cessation treatments is critical to reversing Kentucky's longstanding high rate of tobacco use once and for all.
- According to the CDC, comprehensive coverage that includes all forms of evidence-based cessation treatments increases the rate at which tobacco users quit.
- This legislation would ensure tobacco cessation coverage stays consistent over time – ultimately saving lives and taxpayer dollars, according to the Legislative Research Commission's own fiscal impact statement from 2016.