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Clinton County Health Department Press Release

"Clinton County Public Health Service Says Now is the Time for Health Care Providers to Help NY Smokers Quit" (May 20, 2008)

Clinton County Health Department announced today that the U.S. Public Health Service's newly released guideline for tobacco use cessation and the increase in the cost of cigarettes provide a strong incentive for health care clinicians to help New York's 2.8 million smokers to quit.

The Clinical Practice Guideline: Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update represents nearly two years of work by a 24-member panel, and has been developed by the input and review of many tobacco treatment researchers and clinicians.

Tobacco dependence is a chronic disease that often requires repeated intervention and multiple attempts to quit. Effective treatments exist that can significantly increase rates of long-term abstinence.

"There are currently more scientifically proven tools to help smokers quit," said Paula Calkins Lacombe, Director of the Clinton County Health Department. The 2008 Guideline outlines interventions that include safe and effective medications, counseling and telephone quit-lines. These tools, plus the June 3rd \$1.25 increase in the cost of cigarettes in NYS, could impel smokers like never before to quit smoking now." Clinicians need to know that tobacco dependence treatment is effective and should offer every patient who uses tobacco at least the brief treatments shown to be effective in the new Guideline.

"Combining counseling and medication is especially effective in helping smokers quit," said William V. Coor, Executive Director of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "These findings are based on a thorough review of the evidence and have critical implications for policymakers as well as medical providers."

According to the 2008 Guideline update, insurance coverage for tobacco-dependence treatment would increase the rates that smokers use the treatments and increase successful quits. The Guideline notes that tobacco dependence treatments are both

clinically effective and highly cost-effective relative to interventions for other clinical disorders.

The New York Tobacco Control Program has been in line with this thinking since 2004 when it funded 19 Cessation Centers across the state to provide training and technical assistance to health care organizations and clinicians to support their efforts in assisting their patients to quit smoking. Additionally in February 2008, the Department launched the “Don’t be Silent about Smoking” media campaign to urge clinicians to spend more time helping their patients quit. The campaign uses graphic images of health care professionals with their mouths stitched or taped shut to dramatize how doctors can help their patients quit by talking about smoking. Studies have shown that, while 70% of smokers want to quit, only 27% of doctors usually monitor their patients’ progress in quit attempts. With physician assistance, the 7% of smokers who achieve long-term abstinence on their own can increase to 30%.

“This is a doctor’s greatest opportunity to save lives,” said Ms. Calkins Lacombe. “When clinicians take the time to talk to their patients about smoking and provide assistance with quitting, long-term success can be achieved.”

“Now more than ever, smokers are ready to quit smoking, we have proven treatments that can double and even triple the likelihood of success,” said Margot Gold, Administrator of the North Country Tobacco Cessation Center. The New York State Health Department provides an easy to use website for health care clinicians, www.talktoyourpatients.org, which provides information on effective counseling and medical treatment for tobacco use cessation.

Smokers who want to quit can get help by calling the New York State Smokers’ Quitline at 1-866 NY QUIT (1-866-697-8487) or logging on to www.nysmokefree.com. The Quitline and Quit site offer a free starter kit of nicotine patches, gum or lozenges for eligible New York State smokers. Trained Quitline specialists offer free help with quit plans and information about local stop smoking programs and informational taped messages.

Endorsed by: _____
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