

# Providing Quitline Services is a Smart Investment



Healthcare costs from smoking are skyrocketing! **Kentucky spends over \$1.92 billion each year on medical costs directly caused by smoking.** The Kentucky Medicaid program accounts for nearly \$600 million of those costs.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Kentucky, and quitting is the single best thing tobacco users can do to improve their health.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 demonstrates savings to employers when smokers quit.

**Table 1. Annual excess costs to employers per smoker<sup>3</sup>**

| Eliminated costs                     | Annual savings |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Absenteeism                          | \$621          |
| Presenteeism                         | \$555          |
| Smoking breaks                       | \$3,697        |
| Healthcare costs                     | \$2,470        |
| Pension benefits (expense reduction) | (\$356)        |
| <b>Annual Total</b>                  | <b>\$6,987</b> |

Employers can save nearly \$600 per month per employee who quits smoking!

Estimates show for every \$1 invested in Kentucky's quitline from 2015 to 2020, more than \$4 was returned!

An analysis of 2015-2020 data from Quit Now Kentucky, the state's tobacco quitline, found the quitline's estimated return on investment (ROI) was \$4.03:1.<sup>4</sup> This estimated return on investment was evaluated by comparing the quitline's total budgeted expenditures from 2015-2020 to expected cost savings. These cost savings were estimated by applying the costs in Table 1 to the expected smoking abstinence rate for people enrolled in the quitline.

**Table 2. Quitline enrollees, cost savings & ROI 2015 - 2020**

| Description  | Total         |
|--|---------------|
| Number of new enrollees                              | 15,779        |
| Projected 12-month abstinence per follow-up surveys  | 1,559         |
| Estimated cost savings                               | \$10,888,540  |
| Quitline expenses                                    | \$2,163,028   |
| Estimated quitline return on investment              | \$8,725,512   |
| <b>Estimated quitline return on investment ratio</b> | <b>4.03:1</b> |

1. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/kentucky>. Amounts do not include health costs caused by exposure to secondhand smoke, smoking-caused fires, smokeless tobacco use, or cigar and pipe smoking. Tobacco use also imposes additional costs such as workplace productivity losses and damage to property.

2. U.S. Surgeon General. U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Smoking Cessation.

3. Inflation-adjusted estimates from Berman, M. et al "Estimating the cost of a smoking employee." *Tob Control* (2014) 23: 428-433.

4. Kentucky Center for Smoke-free Policy, University of Kentucky College of Nursing; University of Kentucky College of Medicine. December 2021.



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