AHEC-of-a-Difference in Florida: The Uniqueness of AHEC Group Cessation Services

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Background

The Florida AHEC Network is comprised of five AHEC Programs administered by Florida's medical schools at Florida State University, Nova Southeastern University, University of Florida, University of South Florida, and University of Miami and 10 affiliated not-for-profit AHEC Centers serving all 67 counties. Since FY 2007-2008, the AHEC Network has been a leader in the Florida Comprehensive Statewide Tobacco Education and Use Prevention Program (F.S. 381.84) by strengthening the capacity of Florida's healthcare system to deliver effective tobacco treatment services and providing community-based tobacco cessation services that are accessible to all Floridians. Administration and further developments of the Tobacco Free Florida (TFF) AHEC Cessation Program is provided by the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida.

AHECs have capitalized on their existing infrastructure to quickly launch cessation programs in the community. Through extensive relationships and partnerships with federally qualified health centers, hospitals, health departments, worksites, tobacco-free partnerships, academic institutions, and healthcare providers, AHECs have been quick to respond to the needs of the community and assure the legislature and BTFF that resources are being effectively leveraged and maximally utilized to address local, regional, and statewide needs related to tobacco control.

Curriculum Development

The TFF AHEC Cessation Program is committed to helping people quit tobacco and positively impacting the health and well-being of Florida citizens. Through the development and implementation of two types of group counseling curriculums, AHECs have reached thousands of tobacco users from all walks of life. The curriculums both assist participants with developing a quit plan and address five core topics: Dangers of tobacco use; Benefits of quitting; Challenges of quitting; Aids for quitting; and Support for quitting.

Quit Smoking Now (QSN). QSN was initially developed by Florida State University AHEC Program Office staff who contributed time, effort, and expertise to create a curriculum designed by ex-smokers to resonate with a smoker who wants to become tobacco free. Basing the curriculum on tobacco scientific evidence and many years of clinical work in helping tobacco users quit, the AHEC Network appointed highly trained staff to develop a curriculum committee to ensure that the QSN incorporated the philosophy of the CDC's Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control and the Clinical Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Tobacco Use and Dependence. The curriculum has had several updates including the development of supplements (smokeless tobacco, treating pregnant women, and relapse prevention). A group quit attempt is part of the third week of the program.

Tools To Quit (TTQ). TTQ was developed by Gulfcoast South AHEC as in intensive and comprehensive 2-hour seminar to provide participants with a viable alternative to the 6-week QSN. The TTQ curriculum responds to the needs of "hard to reach" populations throughout the state. It was designed to cover many of the same topics addressed in the QSN. However, TTQ participants receive information on how to prepare and pick their own quit date.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is provided following the DHHS Guidelines for the Treatment of Tobacco Use and Dependency. Both AHEC group options provides eligible participants with up to four weeks of free combination NRT including patches and gum or lozenges. Additional Tobacco Free Florida "Quit Your Way" resources are offered for further support of the participants' cessation quit attempt.

Group Quit Class led by an AHEC TTS

Group Quit Class led by an AHEC TTS

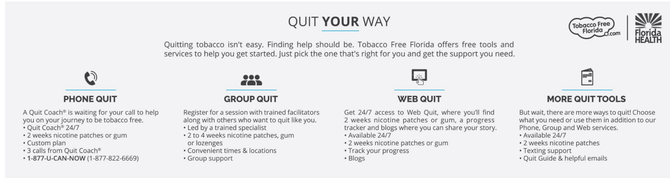
Implementation and Resources

AHEC group cessation services offers participants an opportunity to learn behavioral techniques for smoking cessation in a supportive group environment with access to NRT and self-help materials to help manage withdrawal symptoms and increase the likelihood of a successful quit attempt with an individualized quit plan.

Group cessation classes are available in the 67 counties throughout Florida at convenient locations and times to open greater access to participants. Groups are open to the general public and special populations.

AHEC group cessation options serves Florida's uniquely diverse populations. In general, during the FY 2016 AHEC group cessation participants were similar to smokers statewide for gender, race, and ethnicity. However, most participants tended to be slightly older and have more education. A majority of participants were uninsured (34%) or had Medicaid (16%) or Medicare (15%). Most participants tended to be heavier smokers and more highly addicted than the Florida tobacco user population.

AHEC group cessation services are marketed statewide and locally using diverse and strategic investments with media outlets and vendors. Focusing heavily in local communities, AHECs reach residents using a comprehensive campaign message while remaining cost-effective as possible.



QUIT YOUR WAY

Quitting tobacco isn't easy. Finding help should be. Tobacco Free Florida offers free tools and services to help you get started. Just pick the one that's right for you and get the support you need.

PHONE QUIT

A Quit Coach® is waiting for your call to help you on your journey to be tobacco free.
- Quit Coach® 24/7
- 2 weeks nicotine patches or gum
- Custom plan
- 3 calls from Quit Coach®
- 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (1-877-822-6669)

GROUP QUIT

Register for a session with trained facilitators along with others who want to quit like you.
- Led by a trained specialist
- 2 to 4 weeks nicotine patches, gum or lozenges
- Convenient times & locations
- Group support

WEB QUIT

Get 24/7 access to Web Quit, where you'll find 2 weeks nicotine patches or gum, a progress tracker and blogs where you can share your story.
- Available 24/7
- 2 weeks nicotine patches or gum
- Track your progress
- Blogs

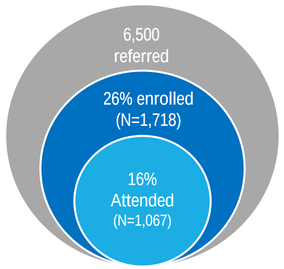
MORE QUIT TOOLS

But wait, there are more ways to quit! Choose what you need or use them in addition to our Phone, Group and Web services.
- Available 24/7
- 2 weeks nicotine patches
- Texting support
- Quit Guide & helpful emails

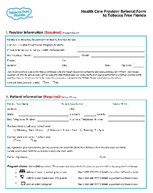
Tobacco Treatment Specialist (TTS) Training: In 2010, Florida State University AHEC Tobacco Program established its Tobacco Treatment Specialist Foundation Course which is an internationally recognized training program that is accredited by the Association for Treatment of Tobacco Use and Dependence (ATTUD). From 2010 to 2017 over 900 TTS have completed this training.

Systems Change/E-Referrals: AHECs support health care providers by incorporating or enhancing tobacco treatment services within their systems or organizations. Systems change related to tobacco cessation is a best practice and another way of accessing cessation services. It incorporates the Ask, Advise, Refer methods into clinical operations. The E-referral process is made through the use of Electronic Medical Records directly to the AHEC statewide tracking system or via traditional paper fax forms.

Attrition of Referred Participants
January – June 2016



TFF Referral Form

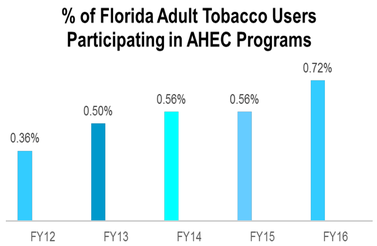


Results

Tobacco Cessation Group Statistics for Florida AHECs

Data Year	Attendees
July 2008 – June 2009	4,387
July 2009 – June 2010	6,962
July 2010 – June 2011	9,150
July 2011 – June 2012	11,596
July 2012 – June 2013	17,801
July 2013 – June 2014	18,856
July 2014 – June 2015	19,880
July 2015 – June 2016	24,029

Internal AHEC Network Data: July 2008 - June 2015
External Evaluator Data (PDA): July 2015 - June 2016



FY 2015-2016 was AHECs most successful year to date for serving Florida tobacco users.

Quit Rates: Both AHEC group cessations options have maintained a strong quit rate. The overall 30-day abstinence rate for FY16 was 32.4%. TTQ (30.6%) and QSN (36.1%). The maintenance of a strong quit rate indicates that the group programs continue to help people quit tobacco.

Course Satisfaction as a Quality Measure: Of those surveyed at 7-month follow-up, a strong majority were very or mostly satisfied with the overall programs including, facilitators, information provided, and helpfulness of course components.

Courses Held and Attendance: FY 2016 AHECs held 4,656 courses throughout the state.
April 1 - June 30, 2016 71% of TTQ courses and 49% of QSN courses had 4 or more attendees.

Promising Practices & Lessons Learned

To ensure the AHEC cessation program activities are conducted in a consistent manner across the state Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) were created. Implementation of these procedures are resulting in positive program outcomes and increased efficiencies statewide.

Implementation of the Tobacco Free Florida AHEC Cessation Tracker (TFFACT) online system aided in the management and evaluation of all pre-registration, participant, course, training, NRT distribution, and referral data. This system allows for further development of evaluation tools including, but not limited to, quality improvement measures to ensure programmatic issues are addressed in a timely manner.

AHECs have identified and successfully implemented cessation programs in special populations with a greater incidence of smoking. Some of these special populations include mental health, substance abuse, and homeless or near homeless individuals. AHECs knowledge and expertise with special groups have led to:

- Increased partnerships with organizations interacting with special populations
- Invaluable lessons that have become guiding principles to help TTS understand the underlying psychosocial behaviors associated with these populations and subgroups and how these behaviors can affect an individual's success with quitting tobacco.

Contact

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Tobacco Free Florida
Quit Your Way

External Evaluators

Professional Data Analysis, Inc. is an independent evaluation and statistical consulting firm contracted by BTFF to conduct an external evaluation of the tobacco cessation services provided by the AHEC Network. Annual and Ad Hoc reports are provided to describe and evaluate the current cessation services provided by the five AHEC program offices and their 10 non-profit AHEC centers. Results and findings included in this presentation were provided in PDA's 2015-2016 annual report of the AHEC Network tobacco cessation services.

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