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## **TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY IS HELPING EMPLOYEES QUIT TOBACCO**

***Good for business. Great for health.***



**Contact:**

Vanessa Phillips  
850-595-6500 ext. 1830

**Pensacola, FL. – Tobacco Free Florida in Escambia County can help your business adopt tobacco free wellness policies for free.**

While it is common knowledge that smoking is bad for the smoker, not many consider the effects this addiction has on local businesses. In Florida alone, the annual direct costs to the economy attributable to smoking exceed \$19.6 billion, including workplace productivity losses of \$4.4 billion; premature death losses of \$7.9 billion; and direct medical expenditures of \$7.2 billion.<sup>i</sup> Between both the additional healthcare costs and losses in productivity, an employee who smokes could cost a business more than \$6,000 every year.<sup>ii</sup> For each employee that quits, a business can save as much as \$2,000 per year through reduced insurance costs.<sup>iii</sup>

Tobacco/nicotine dependence is a chronic and relapsing condition. More than 70 percent of smokers want to quit, but few will succeed without help. Tobacco use treatment doubles quitting success rates.

In Escambia County, local Tobacco Free Florida staff have worked for over a decade to support the tobacco free worksite initiative. Staff can provide technical assistance, print materials, and link employees to cessation resources free of charge.

Our program is reaching out to local businesses, virtually. We are encouraging business owners and management teams to help their employees quit. Employers have a unique opportunity to provide employees with access to proven-effective tobacco cessation medications and counseling. Our program can assist “free of charge”, stated Dr. Vanessa Phillips, Division Director for Communications, Health Education, Nutrition, and Public Health Preparedness Programming.

Most adult cigarette smokers say that they want to quit,<sup>iv</sup> but quitting smoking is hard and may require several attempts.<sup>v,vi</sup> Creating a quit plan and using proven-effective resources, like Tobacco Free Florida, can significantly increase your chances of quitting

smoking for good. <sup>vii,viii,ix</sup> Smokers can and do quit smoking. In fact, today there are more former smokers than current smokers in Florida.<sup>x</sup>

Tobacco Free Florida recommends that employers implement a worksite model, which includes the following three principles:

- Provide employees with access to proven successful tobacco cessation medications and counseling.
- Create a supportive workplace environment that makes it easier for your employees to quit.
- Evaluate your progress and success and adapt your plan accordingly.

With the use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) expanding in recent years, it is important to note that these products are not an FDA approved cessation aid. “The use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) products is not a recommended method of tobacco cessation,” said Dr. Phillips. “We can assist your business in shaping a policy that provides approved, free, and convenient cessation options for your employees. Let’s start the New Year off right.”

Tobacco Free Florida’s Quit Your Way program makes it easier than ever for tobacco users to access evidence-based, free tools and services to help them quit tobacco. Tobacco Free Florida in Escambia County is offering free virtual cessation classes. Pre-registration is required by calling 850-398-6965. For more information on the Quit Your Way program, please visit [tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway](http://tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway).

People can also access Tobacco Free Florida’s online Cost Calculator to find out how much money they could save by quitting smoking at [tobaccofreeflorida.com/calculator](http://tobaccofreeflorida.com/calculator).

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### **About Tobacco Free Worksites**

The department works to ensure businesses have a seamless process when protecting themselves and their employees by incorporating tobacco free workplace policies. If your business is considering or needing more information about the adoption of tobacco free business policies, technical assistance is available to you, free of charge.

We are here to help you. To learn more about the tobacco free worksite initiatives, visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/business](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/business).

## About Tobacco Free Florida

The Florida Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since the program began in 2007, more than 254,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there was 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services, visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com) or follow the campaign on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida](https://www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida) or on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla](https://www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla).

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<sup>i</sup> Penn State. "Potential Costs and Benefits of Smoking Cessation for Florida." 30 April 2010. Web. 1 March 2011. <http://www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking/tobacco-control-advocacy/reports-resources/cessation-economic-benefits/reports/SmokingCessationTheEconomicBenefits.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Berman, Micah, Crane, Rob, Seiber, Eric, Munur, Mehmet. Estimating the cost of a smoking employee. *British Medical Journal*. 2014;176(12):1792-1798. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.6530.

<sup>iii</sup> Berman, Micah, Crane, Rob, Seiber, Eric, Munur, Mehmet. Estimating the cost of a smoking employee. *British Medical Journal*. 2014;176(12):1792-1798. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.6530.

<sup>iv</sup> Babb S, Malarcher A, Schauer G, Asman K, Jamal A. Quitting Smoking Among Adults — United States, 2000–2015. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2017;65:1457–1464. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6552a1>

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2010 [accessed 2018 Dec 14].

<sup>vi</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Reducing Tobacco Use: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2000 [accessed 2018 Dec 14].

<sup>vii</sup> US Public Health Service. *Treating tobacco use and dependence: 2008 update. Clinical practice guideline*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, US Public Health Service; 2008. <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/clinicians-providers/guidelines-recommendations/tobacco/index.html>

<sup>viii</sup> US Public Health Service. *Treating tobacco use and dependence: 2008 update. Clinical practice guideline*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, US Public Health Service; 2008. <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/clinicians-providers/guidelines-recommendations/tobacco/index.html>

<sup>ix</sup> Patnode CD, Henderson JT, Thompson JH, Senger CA, Fortmann SP, Whitlock EP. Behavioral counseling and pharmacotherapy interventions for tobacco cessation in adults, including pregnant women: a review of reviews for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. *Ann Intern Med* 2015;163:608–21

<sup>x</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Prevalence and Trends Data, 2017*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.