

Somerset Public Health Welcomes New Quitting Conversations Partner

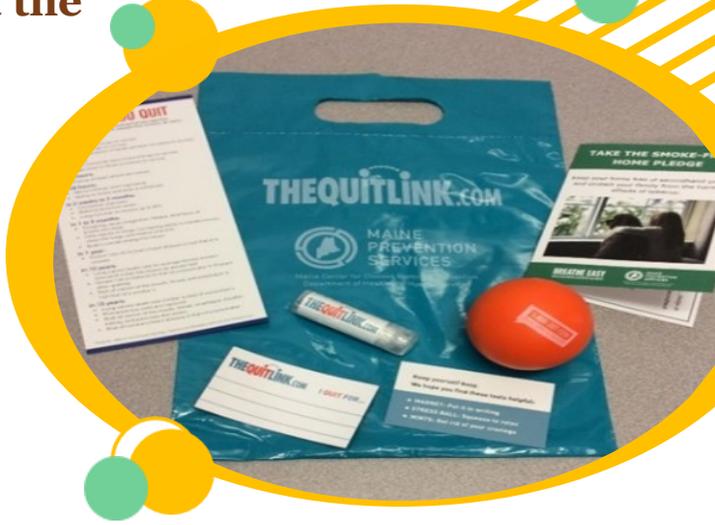
These case managers are ready to have #QuittingConversations. They understand that quitting is hard, believe that quitting is important, and care enough to connect the people they serve with the support they need.

People who use tobacco products usually know it is bad for their own health, but adult smoking also exposes others, including children and pets, to toxic second-hand smoke and poisonous third-hand residues. Adult smoking also undermines school-and community-based efforts to prevent youth from starting tobacco use in the first place.

Somerset County has an adult smoking rate of 21%. It is higher than the state average of 20% and at the top of the 13-21% range for all of Maine's counties, according to the 2019 County Health Rankings. These high adult smoking rates contribute to a ranking of 16 out of 16 counties for health factors and 14 of 16 for health outcomes.

Five of seven Crisis & Counseling case managers serving Northern Kennebec and Somerset Counties gathered in November 2019 to embrace learning how to have conversations about quitting tobacco with their clients. District Tobacco Prevention Partner Somerset Public Health provided non-clinical outreach (NCO) training. NCO aims to make it easier for social service providers to do as follows:

- Ask clients about tobacco use, and
- Connect them with evidence-based tobacco treatment through the Maine Tobacco Help Line (MTHL) via TheQuitLink.com.



The MTHL is a free, confidential program available to all Maine residents that offers tobacco treatment over the phone and nicotine replacement therapy medication. TheQuitLink.com is an online resource to support Maine residents to be tobacco-free. Quitting Conversations Partners give clients QuitLink Kits as thank you gifts when they agree to try quitting. Inside are mints, a stress ball, and other tools to support a quit attempt.

Somerset Public Health believes having more Quitting Conversations Partners increases the chances that a community member who smokes will have multiple conversations about quitting over time. Every conversation moves a smoker closer to making a quit attempt and every quit attempt moves a quitter closer to long-term success.

Crisis & Counseling is the second group of behavioral health case managers serving Somerset County trained as Quitting Conversations Partners. As case managers, they support individuals by coordinating community-based services with a holistic approach that includes traditional mental health services, as well as primary healthcare, housing, transportation, employment, social relationships, and/or community participation.

According to the MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence, people living with substance use and psychiatric disorders are 2 to 4 times more likely to smoke and the behavioral health population consumes 44% of all cigarettes consumed in the U.S. Tobacco dependence can be both a health and financial burden for many. They are more likely to have low annual household incomes and lack access to health insurance, health care, and quitting help. These factors may make it more challenging, but many of these smokers do want to quit. Quitting Conversations Partners in behavioral health help to reach this high-risk group.

Somerset Public Health (SPH) now has six Quitting Conversations Partners. Feedback from the November training indicates that more behavioral clients will benefit. On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being “most likely”, the average scores on post-training surveys submitted by Crisis & Counseling case managers were 4.5 for “More likely to have discussions about tobacco use” and 4.8 for “More likely to make a direct referral using TheQuitLink”. That is good news for the 150 individuals and their families served by this organization each year.

“I learned with assistance the quit rate is majorly increased. I’ll read more & then use [this] info”

- Crisis & Counseling Case Manager after training

After the training, participants were happy to stand for a photograph for to help promote the program via social media.

SPH’s social media efforts encourage more community partners to engage with various prevention efforts, including having conversations about quitting and promoting the MTHL. SPH also provides ongoing technical assistance including tobacco prevention materials and refresher trainings for all its Quitting Conversations Partners.

For more information, Contact SPH Community Health Educator Deb Casey at (207) 858-8458.

Find Somerset Public Health Online:

Website: somersepublichealth.org
Facebook: facebook.com/SomersetPublicHealth
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About Somerset Public Health:

Somerset Public Health is a coalition of staff members, community members, organizations, and businesses working together to improve health in Somerset County. Our goal is to make Somerset County a healthier place to live and work for the families we serve. We strive to make this happen by: improving nutrition; increasing physical activity; stopping tobacco use; preventing drug abuse; promoting the responsible use of alcohol. To do all of this, we need your help. We work with community members, schools, workplaces, child-care centers, service groups, and other community groups to make the places we visit every day healthier.

