

Regional Approach to Tobacco Cessation

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Introduction

Partnership for a Tobacco Free Northeast PA's mission is to improve the quality of life in our communities by reducing tobacco use. The Partnership oversees tobacco control programming in the 10-county Pennsylvania Northeast Health District. As new district primary contractors in October 2007, we did a reconnaissance of tobacco cessation providers and programs in the fall 2007. Results revealed a combination of treatment strategies, unclear provider knowledge and service expectations. Based on some previous investigation and results from our interviews, we identified needs for comprehensive standardized tobacco treatment for all modalities and introduced and new treatment protocols and standards of service. This was accomplished through provider skill-building training and education.

Key Points

Based on the ATTUD Core Competencies and CDC's Best Practices, protocols were developed for client intake assessment and client nicotine replacement therapy. An agency, which could provide district-wide training to health care professionals as well as the cessation providers, was hired and their staff trainer became a certified tobacco treatment specialist from the New Jersey Tobacco Dependence Program. By March 2008, all current treatment providers were retrained unless they were previously certified through a state recognized program.

Benefits

- Counselors gained competency to actively engage with their clients' treatment instead of simply offering a book curriculum.
- Counselors learned individual counseling skills to see more clients in a shorter period of time, making the treatment program more accessible and available to more clients.
- Standards were implemented to ensure that all tobacco clients enrolled in treatment received the same high quality comprehensive service, providing the best opportunity to assist them in their quit attempt.

Conclusion

Optimum standards can lead to better client outcomes and more client access to treatment.