

# **Gov. Beshear's Efforts to Reduce Tobacco Use in Kentucky**

## **Supports Statewide Smoke-Free Law**

Governor Beshear has been working with legislators for some time on proposed smoke-free legislation, and will again fully support the legislation next year.

## **Increasing Cigarette Taxes**

In 2009, Gov. Beshear signed into a law a 30 cent increase in Kentucky's cigarette tax. Studies show that increases in a state's cigarette tax can reduce a state's smoking rate, particularly among teenagers and pregnant women.

## **Smoking Cessation**

In 2010, Gov. Beshear made Medicaid recipients eligible for nicotine replacement therapy and tobacco cessation medications. Those who received the prescriptions or drugs would be required to enroll in counseling programs.

In 2011, Gov. Beshear expanded the counseling services of the Kentucky Tobacco Quit Line to younger Kentuckians to improve services available to youth interested in giving up cigarettes or other tobacco products. With this change, the Quit Line began providing services to Kentucky youth ages 15 to 17 years old. Prior to this change, services were available only to people 18 and older.

## **Medicaid Expansion and Private Health Insurance**

When Gov. Beshear expanded Medicaid eligibility in May 2013, more than 300,000 Kentuckians gained new access to free tobacco cessation resources through the program.

Additionally, the Affordable Care Act requires all health insurance plans, whether public or private, to provide comprehensive coverage for tobacco cessation. Since open enrollment last fall, more than 80,000 Kentuckians purchased private health insurance through kynect and now have resources to help them quit using tobacco.

## **Youth Smoking Prevention**

The Department for Behavioral Health Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities in conjunction with the Department of Public Health and the Alcohol Beverage Control created Kentucky's first tobacco retail education program. The program is offered online and educates store owners and clerks on state and federal tobacco laws, fines and how to effectively refuse sales to underage youth. The program was launched in 2012 and has trained 1,055 store clerks in more than 700 stores.

## **Ban E-cigs for Youth**

In 2014, Gov. Beshear signed Senate Bill 109 into law, which banned the sale of all types of e-cigarettes to minors. Gov. Beshear had urged the banning of these devices in his State of the Commonwealth address. Kentucky has the highest rates of youth smoking in the country, and studies show that if children don't try cigarettes – including e-cigarettes – before the age of 18, they are significantly less likely to become smokers later in life. SB109 prohibited the sales of all types of e-cigarettes to minors, regardless of whether the devices use nicotine.

**kyhealthnow**

Reducing Kentucky's smoking rate by 10 percent over the next five years is one goal of Gov. Beshear's recently created initiative, kyhealthnow, which aims to reduce Kentucky's dismal health rankings and habits. The initiative seeks to use goals and strategies to create measurable improvements in seven health areas that include obesity, cancer and health insurance.

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