



National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH) Poster:

Enhancing Tobacco Treatment Supports in Substance Use Recovery: A Collaborative Initiative to Address Tobacco Use Disparities in the Recovery Community in Maine

Presented by:

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MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence (CTI) operates the Maine QuitLink (MQL) on behalf of Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC), Maine Department of Health and Human Services. The MQL is an evidence-based tobacco treatment program free for all residents of Maine who use tobacco products.

Since 2017, CTI's Practice Integration team has worked with medical and behavioral health practices and health systems across the state to support implementation of tobacco screening and referral for treatment as standard care. Typically, CTI reaches out to an organization's clinical leadership to offer training and technical assistance to implement changes in workflows, electronic health records, and staff behavior to support systems change.

In 2023 two organizations providing community-based substance use recovery services in Maine, Groups Recover Together (Groups Recovery) and Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC), approached CTI seeking funding and support. They each had their own strategies to improve how they addressed tobacco use among their program participants and program staff. CTI provided funds from its contract with Maine CDC as well as training and technical assistance.

Groups Recover Together- Tobacco Pilot Phase I April 2024-December 2024

Final Report

Summary of Intentions and Goals of original project

The purpose of this project was to conduct research on tobacco and opioids, assess Groups' current tobacco cessation efforts, identify related data and explore culture norms. We aimed to create a collaborative plan to incorporate best-practice tobacco cessation into Groups' treatment treatment model and subsequently execute this pilot plan to test recommended changes.



Summary of accomplishments

Conducted external research on the relationship between nicotine/tobacco use disorder and opioids/OD

Conduct internal assessments and collect baseline data

Staff assessment (n=38)

Member assessment (n=436)

Informally surveyed employees in a variety of different positions across Groups to understand the cultural perspective on tobacco use/cessation

Internal discussion on Groups tobacco cessation benefits for staff and improvements needed

Intake revisions

Tobacco questions added to intake to measure tobacco status, volume of use, readiness to quit--

Quit resources added to Member Welcome Packet

Brief intervention and cessation resources available via intake

Staff training held on tobacco basics and brief interventions (n=73)

Full day training for RSS team on 10/1/2024- 13 people attended

Post-tobacco training feedback survey sent 10/24 (n=11), 90.9% of people agreed or strongly agreed that they felt prepared and empowered to ask a member about their tobacco use in a safe and supportive way with 81.8% noting that they agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more prepared to help someone interested in quitting, following the full day training.

The large majority of the respondents said they felt that the training was a good use of their time and recommended further training for the rest of the staff

Since Midterm Assessment:



Created new provider intervention and education on tobacco use risks and the benefits of quitting at weekly Groups meetings. All providers across Maine were trained on this curriculum and then were expected to implement them into all of their groups.

"I can say anecdotally that the intervention seemed to be very well received by our staff, and providers. They noted specifically that it contributed to their knowledge base and gave them better tools to help support our patients. Patients reported an interest in the subject matter, interest in making new tobacco quit attempts, and interest in attendance at educational events and follow-ups with staff."- Megan Britton, MD

Weekly tobacco-specific group

A free, voluntary 6-week support group for members that began 9/17 and was facilitated by an external tobacco expert.

Low weekly attendance numbers but 2 people quit and several more cut down.

Many others expressed interest in joining the group and reported feeling supported by the offer.

Follow-up internal assessment

Member assessment (n=299 as of 3pm 12/116)

Summary of pre- and post-assessment and conclusions drawn between the two Member Tobacco Use Pre-Intervention Survey Results- conducted 8/24

Survey data was collected from Groups members in Maine in August 2024 about their knowledge, attitudes, experience and perceptions regarding tobacco use. Response rate was approximately 24% with 436 respondents completing the survey. Gender was fairly evenly split among males and females and all ages were represented with the majority of respondents (76%) between the ages of 31-50 years old and 12% being 51-60 years old.

The highlights of the survey learnings are below:

- 78.5% of respondents use tobacco.
- When asked what Groups could do to support them with their tobacco use, 64% said to provide NRT. 21% said provide tobacco education and materials, 21% also said referrals to the State Quitline and 18% said tobacco specific support groups.

- 50.1% of the respondents currently use tobacco products and want to quit.
 - This group smokes heavily with 81.5% using frequently throughout the day.
 - Almost every one in this group has tried to quit multiple times with 77% having tried to quit between 2-10 times.
 - The biggest challenges this group faces when trying to quit is that their friends and family smoke (47.9%), it's just too hard (47%), they'd like to try hypnosis but its cost prohibitive (34.6%), and NRT is too expensive (25.3%).
 - Many people mentioned using vape as a means to quit combustible cigarettes (several admit it doesn't help) and that cigarettes help relieve their stress.
 - 83% of this group is interested in free NRT availability at Groups offices.
- 28.4% of the respondents currently use tobacco and are not interested in quitting.
 - This group smokes a lot with 75.4% using tobacco frequently throughout the day and 21.3% use tobacco occasionally throughout the day.
 - 78% of this group has tried to quit using tobacco multiple times, with the majority having tried to quit 2-5 times.
 - Quitting challenges for this group include that their friends and family smoke (44%), its just too difficult for them (25%), they don't have enough support (13%) and NRT is too expensive (11%).
 - This group has tried a variety of NRT to aid in quit attempts but 32% have never tried NRT and 3.3% (n=4) are using vape to quit combustible products.
 - 51% of this group would be interested in free NRT that was accessible at Groups offices.
- 16.4% of the respondents used to use tobacco products but have since quit.
 - With the exception of 8.5% who only quit once, the remainder of respondents had at least 5 quit attempts.
 - The biggest challenges members faced when quitting were feeling like it was going to



be very difficult (52.3%), their friends and family smoke (42.3%) and NRT is expensive (14.1%).

- Many people mentioned that they vape in the comments.
- This group used a variety of NRT products in their quit attempts with patches and gum being the most common. Vape was again mentioned.
- Even though this group no longer smokes, 45% said they would be interested in free NRT at Groups offices if it were available.

Post-Intervention Tobacco Use Member Tobacco Use Survey Results- conducted 12/24

Survey data was collected from Groups members in Maine in December 2024 regarding their perspective about the impact of Groups' intervention regarding tobacco cessation over the last 6 months. Response rate was approximately 17% with 299 respondents completing the survey. Gender was fairly evenly split among males and females and all ages were represented with the majority of respondents (74%) between the ages of 31-50 years old and 14.9% being 51-60 years old. The highlights of the survey learnings are below:

- 53.6% of members noted that they currently use tobacco or vape products and would like to quit compared to 50.1% in our initial tobacco survey.
- 63.1% of members cut down, quit, or made quit attempts in the past six months.
 - This suggests correlation between our increase in tobacco-cessation messaging and the desired result of cutting down on tobacco use.
- When asked about the tobacco-related resources that Groups provided over the past 6 months, 54.7% reported that they discussed tobacco/vape in their normal group, 33.6% reported that they participated in discussions about tobacco with their Groups' medical provider, and 13.5% said they attended our tobacco awareness group.
 - There may have been question confusion taking place here because our records show only 7 unique members utilizing our tobacco awareness specific group, so these 13.5% of people may have been referring to discussion in their normal weekly group about tobacco.



- Only 12% reported that they did not hear anything about tobacco in their group.
- 50.4% of people reported that discussion about tobacco/vape in their group was the most helpful resource.
- Anecdotally, some members continue to advocate for NRT availability through our Groups.

Summary of over-all progress (qualitative and quantitative) and learnings

Primary Takeaways:

Most of our members smoke. And of those, most want to quit. It is highly beneficial to OUD recovery to quit tobacco at the same time as opioids. There is a positive correlation between discussing the benefits of quitting tobacco/vape and cutting down/quitting tobacco/vape.

Summary of things still left to be accomplished/next steps

Continued education and prolonged implementation of a curriculum so all members can engage in discussions about the benefits of tobacco/vape cessation.

Make NRT more accessible- facilitate access to NRT at Groups offices, ensure our providers are prescribing it and that we are referring to the QuitLink.

Expand pilot into other states.

Conduct another round of a quit-curious tobacco support groups.

Increased promotion for greater participation.

A higher rate of our staff use tobacco products vs. general population. Identify new and innovative ways to support them.



PRCC Report Period: 3/7/23 – 10/8/24

- Staff trainings at PRCC, BARN and Health Acadia Inspire were successful
 - o 4 staff members from PRCC attended the Essential Skills Training
 - o 3 staff members from PRCC attended the Intensive Skills Training
 - o 1 staff member from PRCC attended the Tobacco Conference
 - o 19 staff members from PRCC attended the Tobacco Brief Interventions Training including 5 paid coaches.
 - o 35 RCC Staff and trained peer recovery coaches attended the virtual Tobacco Brief Interventions and Referral to Treatment Training including 11 from PRCC, 7 from Healthy Acadia, 4 from the BARN, 2 from Lincoln County RCC, 1 from Franklin County RCC, and 1 from the Hills RCC.
 - o 3 staff members (one from PRCC, one from BARN and one from Healthy Acadia) began the path to certification.
- Screening and Intervention happened with 129 individuals, resulting in 33 referrals to the Maine QuitLink
- Three recovery centers hosted mutual aid groups focused on “quit curious” staff and members
- PRCC is offering an in-person 12 step nicotine cessation group
- All three recovery centers report having significant numbers of nicotine users on staff which limits the number of people eligible for certification according to the National Certification in Nicotine and Tobacco Treatment (NCNTT).

June 2025, at the end of the project PRCC integrated new referral submissions into their intake and check-in process. Staff are following up with individuals they initially weren't able to connect with. This shift marks a promising development, and there is hope that it will be sustainable and continue as part of PRCC's regular workflow



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The MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence (CTI) supports integration of evidence-based tobacco treatment at MaineHealth practices and departments. CTI also administers the statewide tobacco treatment contract on behalf of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC), Maine Department of Health and Human Services. This Maine CDC contract supports the *Maine QuitLink* and *My Life, My Quit* treatment services for all Maine residents. <https://ctimaine.org>