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Roswell Park Awarded Five-Year Contract to Continue Operating New York State Smokers' Quitline

One of the most efficient resources of its kind, Quitline is a key component of state's efforts to advance public health

- Buffalo cancer center has operated this free statewide resource since 2000
- Services include phone and online assistance, tools for healthcare providers
- NY Quitline reaches nearly 3 times as many people as quitlines in other states

BUFFALO, N.Y. — For many smokers fighting tobacco addiction, an encouraging voice on the other end of the phone is the difference-maker that helps them to quit smoking for good — often after a series of unsuccessful quit attempts. For the last 17 years, New Yorkers have relied on support available on demand, when they needed it most, at the other end of a phone connection or through a wealth of online cessation resources. Thanks to a continuing initiative of the New York State Department of Health and the awarding of a contract to Roswell Park Cancer Institute, the services of the New York State Smokers' Quitline (NYSSQL) will be there for New Yorkers to turn to for years to come.

This five-year, \$20.6 million contract will enable Roswell Park Cancer Institute to provide comprehensive telephonic services, online resources and services for healthcare providers, all geared to help tobacco users successfully quit. The grant will support approximately 50 jobs, including 15 new positions created to address an expanded need for services and help meet high-priority needs, such as helping those who have additional struggles overcoming tobacco dependence because of income level, education level and/or mental and behavioral health issues. The Quitline team will also work to expand outreach and resources for health providers toward the goal of helping more users to quit tobacco successfully.

"Our goal is to motivate and help as many New Yorkers as possible to quit smoking and stop using other tobacco products," says New York State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker. "The New York State Smokers' Quitline provides people with the tools and support necessary to help them break their addiction to nicotine, preventing smoking-related disease and early death. The Smokers' Quitline is a key component of our tobacco cessation initiatives, which along with the state's anti-smoking ad campaign and Health Systems for a Tobacco-Free NY program, has helped New York State achieve record low youth and adult smoking rates, 4.3% and 14.2% respectively."

The contract is awarded by competitive bid. Roswell Park has more than 40 years' experience providing tobacco cessation call-center services, and has operated the New York State Smokers' Quitline — one of the first and busiest state quitlines in the nation — since its inception in 2000. In that time, the NYSSQL has responded to more than 2.5 million calls, providing cessation services such as evidence-based telephonic coaching and access to nicotine replacement therapy.

"Roswell Park continues to be a resource promoting health and well-being for all New Yorkers, and the New York State Smokers' Quitline is one very important piece of that work," says Roswell Park President and CEO **Candace S. Johnson, PhD**. "Because the links between tobacco use and cancer are so strong, every time we are able to help one person release themselves from the deadly grip of tobacco addiction, we are furthering our mission to prevent as many cancers as possible through early support and intervention."

The Quitline helps New York smokers to quit tobacco and provides resources for those looking to help a loved one quit. Its comprehensive program ranges from client-centered, tailored coaching to relapse prevention and support; information about stop-smoking medications; two-week nicotine-patch starter kits for those who meet eligibility requirements; and links to healthcare plan benefits and support available through healthcare providers. Through its website, nysmokefree.com, the Quitline provides ready access to tools and resources such as videos and downloads to help tobacco users quit. The Quitline also has a patient referral program to support health providers and enable them to help their tobacco-using patients to quit. Cessation support information is also available for employer groups and the general public.

A new report published online ahead of print in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* and led by a team from The Research Triangle Park in North Carolina ("Comparing the New York State Smokers' Quitline Reach, Services Offered, and Quit Outcomes to 44 Other State Quitlines, 2010 to 2015," available at journals.sagepub.com) concluded that the New York State Smokers' Quitline is among the most efficient cessation resources in the country, reaching nearly three times the average number of people as other state quitlines.

In 2016 alone, New York State Smokers' Quitline coaches assisted 53,060 tobacco users, mailed 46,377 nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) starter kits to eligible New Yorkers and received 15,725 patient referrals from New York State healthcare providers.

"Tobacco is the number-one cause of premature death due to a preventable cause in this country — not just with cancer, but with heart disease and many other deadly and debilitating illnesses," says **Andrew Hyland, PhD**, Chair of Health Behavior at Roswell Park and Director of the New York State Smokers' Quitline. "Quitting smoking is the single most important thing smokers can do to improve their health, and New York State is a national leader for its commitment to help New Yorkers quit smoking."

Comments from New York State Smokers' Quitline Users:

- "It truly meant a lot to me to know that you care. Thank you again. Your encouragement has brought a positive start to my day!"
- "It now [has] been two years since you helped me, and I am smoke-free thanks to your program. I don't know how to thank you for your support. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You saved my life."
- "You guys are great. Because of you I was able to quit smoking. Quitting was [the] hardest thing I've ever experienced. I tried and tried. I finally decided to contact you. I couldn't commit to it right away, but I said to myself, 'It's time.' Here I am on my fourth week of being tobacco-free and feeling better than ever. Thank you."
- "After 40 years of smoking, I was diagnosed with lung cancer. I had surgery and by the grace of God I am a 10-month survivor. Please keep offering this to people. Eventually they will stop if they want to. I stopped so I could live. Thanks for being there."

Snapshot of Those Served by the New York State Smokers' Quitline in 2016:

- Nearly half (49%) were between the ages of 45 and 64
- 53% identified themselves as female
- 17% suffer from depression, 16% from anxiety disorders
- 17% have hypertension, 10% have asthma, 10% have emphysema/COPD and 8% have diabetes
- 44% have annual income less than \$15,000
- 58% report their highest completed education level as at or below a high-school diploma
- 48% are insured through Medicaid, 27% through private insurance

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For an online version of this release, please visit: <https://www.roswellpark.org/media/news/roswell-park-awarded-five-year-contract-continue-operating-new-york-state-smokers>

About Roswell Park:

The mission of Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI) is to understand, prevent and cure cancer. Founded in 1898, RPCI is one of the first cancer centers in the country to be named a National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center and remains the only facility with this designation in Upstate New York. The Institute is a member of the prestigious National Comprehensive Cancer Network, an alliance of the nation's leading cancer centers; maintains affiliate sites; and is a partner in national and international collaborative programs. For more information, visit www.roswellpark.org, call 1-877-ASK-RPCI (1-877-275-7724) or email askrpci@roswellpark.org. Follow Roswell Park on Facebook and Twitter.

About the New York State Smokers' Quitline:

The New York State Smokers' Quitline is a service of the New York State Department of Health and based at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. New Yorkers can call the Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m., and Friday through Sunday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.; outside those times, taped messages offer support and help to quit smoking. Resources are available anytime day or night through the Smokers' Quitsite, www.nysmokefree.com.