



New smoking hotline aims to help youngsters butt out

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North Carolina now has a new toll-free hotline aimed at helping young people quit smoking.

The N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund and the N.C. Division of Public Health co-fund the service, which became operational Nov. 2. Called the N.C. Quitline, it can be accessed by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

"The exciting part is, this Quitline is for youth," said Susan Dietrich, the tobacco prevention coordinator at McDowell High School.

The service allows young people to speak with trained cessation specialists from 8 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week.

They can also arrange for counselors to call them back periodically to check on their progress and answer questions.

Special counseling is available for pregnant women and spit tobacco users.

The service is presented in multiple languages, including Spanish.

Though the line focuses on helping youth quit, Dietrich said any tobacco user who is ready to stop is free to call.

The Quitline also features a fax referral system, allowing tobacco prevention staff members like Dietrich to submit a student's name and have a counselor contact the student.

And the service allows young people to join their parents in quitting, Dietrich said. She hopes families will call the Quitline together.

Quitline personnel will not place a call to a tobacco user unless the user asks for a call

back or grants permission through a faxed referral. It isn't possible for a friend or family member to call the Quitline on behalf of a tobacco user.

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