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Public-Private Partnership Resulting in Fewer Employees Smoking

INDIANAPOLIS – A year after a new partnership between Indianapolis Association of Health Underwriters (IAHU) and Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation (ITPC) launched, the results positively reflect employers' interest in reducing tobacco-related costs. Local employers met with representatives from IAHU and ITPC on May 18 to share successes and discuss additional methods to incorporate tobacco cessation into company wellness plans.

The relationship included the Quit Now Indiana Preferred Employer Network, a free program for Indiana-based employers to utilize ITPC's resources, including 1-800-QUIT-NOW. The network, which began with just eight employers, has grown to a community of nearly 400 employers and compliments a network of more than 900 health care providers and 150 organizations. Clearly, companies are responding to the program and are eager to create a healthier workforce by helping employees quit tobacco.

"It's rewarding to know programs in other states have expressed an interest in mirroring our partnership. We've been pleased with the interest from our members in helping their employers reduce tobacco-related health care costs and hope to continue the growth of the program," said IAHU President Susan Rider.

As part of the initiative, IAHU worked through their members to promote the Indiana Tobacco Quitline and other tobacco cessation resources as part of their "value-added" package of wellness benefits their brokers offer to employers.

According to ITPC Executive Director Karla Sneegas, more than 80 percent of all smokers in Indiana want to quit and it's been shown that companies who support tobacco cessation for their employees are more successful in helping them to quit.

"We want to promote a culture of wellness, and providing a smoke-free workplace is part of that (culture). We believe in positive reinforcement in helping them quit smoking; as a result, we had 11 employees quit smoking last year," said Kelsey Taylor, wellness director for Angie's List.

Employers interested in enrolling in the Preferred Employer Network may do so by visiting QuitNowIndiana.com or by calling ITPC Cessation Director Camille Kalil at (317) 519-9763.

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