



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama Department of Public Health announces free help for Alabamians who want to quit tobacco

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson unveiled Alabama's first statewide telephone-based tobacco cessation service. The statewide toll-free number offers counseling to all Alabamians who need assistance quitting cigarettes and chewing tobacco as well as self-help materials, referrals to local programs and discount coupons for nicotine replacement products.

"We know that giving up tobacco isn't easy," Dr. Williamson said. "It's the best thing you can do for your health and the health of those around you. Now with our Tobacco Quitline, we can help."

The 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) phone number will offer counseling services Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. Quit plans are developed with the caller and counselor to fit the caller's needs. Callers to the line can choose to receive follow-up counseling from the Quitline.

Each caller will receive a Quit Kit, as well as discount coupons for nicotine replacement therapy. Non-tobacco users are also encouraged to call to seek help for friends and loved ones who want to quit tobacco. Services are also provided in Spanish and other languages as needed through a translator service.

Alabama's Quitline joins approximately 40 other states in offering free tobacco cessation services. A grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was awarded to ensure that all states have working quitlines to help tobacco users in their quest for a healthier lifestyle.

"Approximately 25 percent of Alabamians smoke, costing the state more than \$1.17 billion per year to treat their smoking-related diseases," said Dr. Jack Hataway, director of the Chronic Disease Prevention Division. "This is a first step in a comprehensive program to help those who want to quit be successful."

A paid media campaign will be seen and heard in the Birmingham area which consists of billboards and radio spots. The phone line, however, is open statewide and is available to all Alabamians. Healthcare providers are encouraged to refer patients to the program through a fax referral system.

For more information, call Brooke Thorington, Tobacco Prevention and Control Division, Alabama Department of Public Health, at 334-206-3830.

