



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Online service celebrates a year of helping tobacco users quit

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tori Howell never thought she could give up cigarettes.

She had quit several times before, but it never lasted long. When she heard a radio ad about a free service of the Alabama Department of Public Health offering counseling and medication to help her quit, she was ready to try again.

Six months later, the 50-year-old Fairhope resident is glad she did. She's grateful for the help she received from [www.alabamaquitnow.com](http://www.alabamaquitnow.com), Alabama's online site to help those who want to quit tobacco use.

Since the service began one year ago, more than 1,600 Alabamians have registered for its free services, including master's level counseling, a personalized quit plan and four weeks of free nicotine replacement therapy patches for those who are enrolled in the program and are medically eligible.

Howell said she was thankful for the online help. "I tell everyone about it," she said. "Knowing that someone was checking on me helped," she said. "This was someone who didn't know me, but felt the need to know how I was doing."

In the past, Howell said she had "quit smoking for every reason but the right one." She finally quit for herself, because "I didn't want any more stress in my life," she said. "It's the best thing I've done. I'm never going to smoke again."

The site is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Tobacco users can log in and begin the counseling process. Anyone can visit the site for information or register to become a member. Members can chat with other users who are quitting at the same time.

While anyone can visit the site, free counseling services and nicotine replacement therapy patches are available to Alabama residents only. [Alabamaquitnow.com](http://Alabamaquitnow.com) is funded through the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) with a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

ADPH also offers the Alabama Tobacco Quitline, a phone-based service that provides the same free program to users who prefer to talk to a counselor for help to quit. Callers may dial 1-800-

QuitNow (1-800-784-8669) and sign up for phone services. Alabama's Quitline has been in operation since 2005 and is funded by ADPH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Alabama has one of the highest smoking rates in the nation," said Jim McVay, director of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease at ADPH. "More than one in five Alabama adults use tobacco."

"By offering free Internet and telephone services, no one has to leave home or pay for medication to help them quit," he said. "Plus, you are twice as likely to quit for good if you have help."

Counselors are available via the Internet or by telephone from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Messages left after hours will be returned the next business day. A Spanish-speaking counselor is available, and other languages are available through a telephone-based translator program.

Health care providers can use the referral form on the [Alabamaquitnow.com](http://Alabamaquitnow.com) site to refer their patients, or use the form found at [www.adph.org/tobacco](http://www.adph.org/tobacco) to refer patients to the telephone service.

For more information about [Alabamaquitnow.com](http://Alabamaquitnow.com) or the Alabama Tobacco Quitline, call Julie Hare at (334) 206-3830.