

# Community Success Story: Partners for Cessation- How Community Partners Worked Together To Address Tobacco Use, Year 1

## Barry-Eaton District Health Department

### Summary

The “Partners for Cessation” project is raising awareness among the community, health care professionals and health care providers about tobacco related health disparities and the need to connect tobacco users to evidence-based cessation services. This project has made a systems change among six health care facilities in the Barry-Eaton district to make sure that all tobacco users are not only being asked and advised about tobacco use, but are also getting connected, if they chose, to cessation services. From April to September, 2014 Barry and Eaton County providers faxed an average of 6.66 referrals to the Quitline each month, and some health care facilities incorporated Ask-Advise-Connect (AAC) directly into their electronic health records.

We know that it takes a tobacco user an average of 11 quit attempts before successfully quitting for good. We hope that each interaction with a health care provider using the AAC process increases the likelihood of a quit attempt to eventually kick the habit for good.

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**Barry-Eaton  
District  
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The Barry-Eaton District Health Department’s Tamah Gustafson, Health Educator and Project Coordinator, presents The Barry Community Health Center with a certificate of commitment to implementing Ask-Advise-Connect (AAC) in their clinic.

### Challenges

In Barry and Eaton Counties young adults between the ages of 18-34, those with a high school education or less, and those having an income below \$50,000 are at higher risk for current tobacco smoking and face a greater risk for a tobacco related disease than other demographic populations. Cancer is the leading cause of potential years of life lost (1,896.4 years of potential life lost to all cancers, 533.2 years of potential life lost due to respiratory cancers, 2010 MDCH Vital Statistics).

While the district has, in the past, had lower cancer death rates than the State of Michigan as a whole, that has not been the case the last five years. With a higher prevalence of smokers in both Barry and Eaton Counties and the incidence of cancers in the lung and bronchus increasing over the past 15 years, there is a clear need for tobacco cessation services awareness and systems to connect patients to these cessation services.

## Solutions

The Barry-Eaton District Health Department, supported by county level tobacco prevention coalitions in both counties, developed and is implementing the “Partners for Cessation” project. This project’s overarching goal is to reduce tobacco use in Barry and Eaton Counties by increasing quit attempts among smokers. To do this, the health department sought out health providers who would be willing to implement Ask-Advise-Connect (AAC).

The AAC program is a system where health care providers are reminded to **ask** patients about tobacco use at every visit, **advise** them to quit, and finally **connect** them to evidence based tobacco cessation resources such as the Michigan Tobacco Quitline. What makes AAC unique is that connections to the Quitline can be made through the electronic health record or can be faxed to the Quitline, which can greatly streamline the process of linking smokers with treatment. In addition, AAC can be implemented by nurses or medical assistants prior to the patient being seen by the provider.

The Health Department received commitment from numerous physician practices, health centers, and WIC programs. The project coordinator and the Health Department’s Medical Director work closely with Practice Managers, Referral Specialists, etc. to implement AAC in their practice(s). Each practice or health care facility is unique so the project was tailored to fit their needs and capacity.

To enhance this project and increase awareness about tobacco cessation services like the Michigan Tobacco Quitline, community partners such as the Barry Substance Abuse Task Force (SATF) launched a media campaign to promote these services to those who are disparately affected by tobacco use in Barry County.

The health department also collaborated with Pennock Health Services to offer a continuing education presentation regarding emerging tobacco products/e-cigarettes and another presentation on the need to address tobacco use with patients and how to implement AAC. Additional presentations were given to increase awareness among various stakeholders around tobacco use, cancer disparities, and the need to get tobacco users connected with tobacco cessation services.

## Results

This project has had some great success thus far. A majority of the first year was spent determining how to implement AAC. We found that the majority of health care providers were on board and knew that this was a priority. The greater question was how to incorporate this into provider offices and streamline the process. Some health care facilities, like Hayes Green Beach Memorial Hospital and Pennock Health Services, were able to incorporate AAC directly into their electronic health records. This was something that we did not foresee happening during the first year of implementation, so we saw this as a huge success. From April 2014 to September 2014 Barry and Eaton County providers sent a total of 40 fax referrals to the Quitline, an average of 6.66 fax referrals per month.

## Look Ahead

We see this project as a way to build the health department’s reputation among health care providers and other organizations, which will help in implementing systems change to reduce tobacco use in our community. Going forward, our goal is to expand the project and get commitment from additional health care providers to implement AAC.