

Press Release

Tobacco Use in the LGBT Community: What we know and what we can do

The MDQuit Resource Center's 11th annual Best Practices Conference recognizes the importance of addressing tobacco use and cessation among the LGBT population.

Ellicott City, MD, January 26, 2017: Public health representatives across Maryland heard from speakers about the current state of health and social disparities in tobacco use. One of the hallmarks of this year's conference came from Scout, PhD, whose keynote address explored ways of "Reaching and Serving LGBT Smokers."

Why is it important to recognize what tobacco use looks like in sexual and gender minorities? Dr. Scout, executive director of *Tellus Who*, opened this conversation with ways to help us as clinical providers, peer specialists, friends/advocates, and organizations to make sure our programs and services are welcoming to LGBT communities. Think about how this is reflected in your logo, your entryway and spaces, and what about the individuals who greet and work with everyone who walks through the door? From visible branding to the use of one-on-one language, these aspects are critical in making sure that LGBT communities are touched and served.

What does tobacco use look like in sexual and gender minorities? Did you know that LGBT individuals are five (5) times more likely to report that they never intend to use a quitline (a free service to all Marylanders) to help them quit smoking, and even 20% are more likely to be unaware of quitline services? Thirty-seven percent (37%) Maryland adults who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual smoke, compared to 15% of those who identify as straight/heterosexual (BRFSS, 2015); nationally, 24% of LGB adults smoke, whereas 17% of straight/heterosexual individuals smoke. The percentage of former smokers in Maryland is also lower among LGB adults at 35%, compared to 24% for straight/heterosexual individuals. These alarming rates are not just for targeting within adulthood – nationally, 40.5% of LGB high school students use tobacco products. There are very limited national data on tobacco use prevalence among transgender and other sexual minority groups (CDC, 2016), leaving us with little information to provide the best targeted approaches for tobacco cessation.

What is available/What can we do:

- Call or refer to the Maryland Tobacco Quitline! 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-888-784-8669) or go online to <http://smokingstopshere.com/>.
- Check out the *This Free Life* campaign that celebrates LGBT communities and seeks to improve the health of LGBT individuals ages 18-24 by encouraging tobacco-free lifestyles. Get information, testimonials, videos, inspiration, and more from the *This Free Life* campaign. *This Free Life* is a public education campaign sponsored by the FDA. More information available online at <https://thisfreelife.betobaccofree.hhs.gov/>
- Visit our website <http://mdquit.org/> for information, research, best practices, and new information about how to address tobacco use in the LGBT population.