

Little 'quit-smoking' help at U.S. mental health centers

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(HealthDay)—Many mental health and addiction treatment centers in the

United States don't help patients quit smoking, a new government study finds.

People with mental illness and/or drug or alcohol addiction are far more likely than others to smoke cigarettes. And they are more likely to die from a smoking-related illness than from a behavioral [health](#) condition, according to the report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

But stop-smoking assistance is limited at behavioral health centers, said Corinne Graffunder, director of CDC's Office on Smoking and Health.

"Many people with mental health and substance abuse disorders want to stop smoking and are able to quit, and can do it with help," Graffunder said in a CDC news release.

"Too many smokers lack access to proven interventions that could ultimately help them quit smoking," she added.

Analyzing 2016 data, the researchers found that only 49 percent of [mental health treatment](#) facilities were smoke-free. And about one-third of [addiction treatment](#) centers were smoke-free.

In addition, only 49 percent of mental health [treatment](#) facilities and 64 percent of addiction treatment facilities screened patients for tobacco use.

Looking specifically at quit-smoking assistance, the researchers found that 38 percent of mental health facilities offered counseling to help quit smoking. One-quarter offered nicotine-replacement therapy—such as nicotine patches or gum—and about one in five offered non-nicotine medications.

Similarly, only 47 percent of drug and alcohol addiction treatment facilities offered smoking-cessation counseling. A little more than one-quarter offered nicotine-replacement therapy, and 20 percent offered non-nicotine medications.

There were significant differences between states. Only 20 percent of Idaho's mental health centers offered smoking-cessation counseling versus 68 percent in Oklahoma, the report noted.

Likewise, quit-smoking advice was available at only 27 percent of Kentucky's drug and alcohol abuse treatment facilities but at 85 percent of New York's, the findings showed.

According to Doug Tipperman, SAMHSA's tobacco policy liaison, "Helping people with [behavioral health](#) conditions quit smoking is a win-win. Quitting smoking reduces the risk of [smoking](#)-related diseases and could also improve [mental health](#) and addiction recovery outcomes."

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, killing nearly half a million people every year. Smoking-related diseases cost Americans nearly \$170 billion a year in direct health care expenses, the authors of the report noted.

The study was published May 10 in the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

More information: The American Cancer Society offers a [guide to quitting smoking](#).

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