

For Immediate Release

Date April 16, 2008

Contact: Communication Office
Vermont Department of Health
802-863-7281
vdhco@vdh.state.vt.us

Mark Ray
802-862-8261
mray@ksvc.com



HEALTH DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES VERMONT QUIT NETWORK 87,000 Vermont Smokers to Benefit from Free Smoking Cessation Services

Burlington, VT – The Vermont Department of Health and its partner organizations around the state are actively trying to reduce the number of smokers by rebranding the existing services as a single resource – the Vermont Quit Network – to let smokers choose the quit-smoking tools that best suit their needs.

The Vermont Quit Network brings together highly effective points of contact – the toll-free Vermont Quit Line, the hospital-based Ready, Set ... Stop program as well as online and self-help resources – that for years have helped Vermont smokers quit. The consolidated Vermont Quit Network makes it even easier for smokers and their families to find the free resources they need to support their efforts.

The creation of the Vermont Quit Network comes at a time when the decrease in smoking prevalence has slowed. Roughly 22 percent of Vermont adults smoked in 1999, but strong educational and health programs have helped to bring that number down to just below 18 percent, where the figure has hovered for the past two years. The Vermont Department of Health's 10-year goal for its "Healthy Vermonters 2010" is to reduce the percentage of smokers to 11 percent.

There are an estimated 87,000 adult smokers in Vermont, and about half try to quit each year. The Vermont Quit Network's new slogan – "Every Try Counts" – acknowledges that on average smokers make 5-7 serious quit attempts and that each of these efforts brings them one step closer to smoke-free living. Most of the 18 percent of Vermonters who smoke started at a young age and have tried to quit in the past, but now need help to realize long-term success.

"We chose the 'Vermont Quit Network' name because it really resonates for Vermonters, representing people working together as well as the range of choices we offer to support smokers trying to quit," said Health Commissioner Sharon Moffatt, RN, MSN. "We know just how difficult it is to quit smoking, so we wanted to empower people with a wide range of effective quit-smoking options."

Bundled together in a single, easily accessible resource, the Vermont Quit Network is reaching out to Vermont smokers and their families and friends with the following:

- **Direct mail.** Every Vermont household is scheduled to receive a mailing in mid-April outlining the free resources offered by the Vermont Department of Health with the three easy and convenient ways to access the services – Online, by Phone or in Person. Three follow-up mailings will go to a much smaller subset of lower-income households. While the smoking rate has been declining in Vermont, some groups still have disproportionately high rates of smoking, including lower-income Vermonters and young adults.
- **Web site.** The new site, VTQuitNetwork.org, introduces Vermonters to each of the three services, along with self-help options, so smokers have an idea what to expect before they call or log on. In the past, some smokers have expressed hesitation about using the free services because they're "not sure what they're getting into." The site also includes photos and bios of many of the coaches so that smokers can begin to meet some of the people behind the Network.
- **Free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT).** The Vermont Quit Network coaches make it simple to have free NRT shipped directly to a smoker's home.
- **Self-help podcasts.** Self-help podcasts to support smokers in their quit attempts will also be available at VTQuitNetwork.org.

For more information about the Vermont Quit Network, visit VTQuitNetwork.org, dial 1.800.QUIT.NOW (784-8669) or visit a quit coach at a local Vermont hospital.

#