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March 8, 2017

Chairman Pollert and House Appropriations Human Resources Division,

My name is Reba Mathern-Jacobson with the American Lung Association in North Dakota. With a grant from BreatheND we've collaborated on a project to integrate tobacco treatment into behavioral health settings.

North Dakota's behavioral health professionals need more professional education on tobacco intervention and recovery. **Their agencies and workplaces need technical support to implement best-practice policy (such as tobacco-free grounds) and procedures (such as standardized tobacco assessment and treatment protocols).** One beauty is that this includes private and public behavioral health systems, so that improvements can be comprehensive, sustainable and statewide.

While smoking rates in the general population have been on a steady downward trend, smoking rates among those with mental illness or addiction remain high, making them the largest disparity group. They purchase 40% of all tobacco in our country. Three fourths of smokers have a past or present problem with mental illness or addiction. At least 65% of people in treatment for substance use disorders also smoke cigarettes.

As a consequence, smoking is the number one cause of death in people with mental illness or addiction. People with a serious mental illness die 25 years younger than the rest of the population, due to tobacco. People with an alcohol addiction die more often of tobacco related illnesses than from alcohol.

People with behavioral health disorders need, and in fact *want*, treatment opportunities and support within the context of their behavioral health care. Tobacco use is inextricably related to the problems presented due to mental illness and other addictions. Quitting smoking is associated with improved mental health outcomes and even a 25% increased likelihood of long-term abstinence from alcohol and drugs.

Clients and their counselors will have greater success with mental health and addictions treatment when tobacco treatment is integrated into behavioral health settings. These are good strides in North Dakota but much work remains yet to be done.

Maintaining funding for BreatheND is crucial to this project.

Thank you,
Reba Mathern-Jacobson, MSW, Director Tobacco Control



2017 Trainings

1. 5-part webinar series with national authority Tony Klein, March-June
2. 8 one-day trainings with Dr. Williams for each Human Service Center and their community partners
 - April - Dickinson, Bismarck
 - May - Grand Forks, Fargo
 - June - Williston, Minot
 - July - Devils Lake, Jamestown
1. 2-day training with experts Dr. Williams and team of Rutgers

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