

Electronic Referrals to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line project

Prior research studies suggest that e-referral systems significantly increase the percentage of tobacco-using patients referred to quit lines. In fact, the percentage of adult tobacco users referred to a quit line service increased from 0.3% to 13.9% once e-referrals were utilized (Adsit et al., 2014). Before implementing this project, the quit line service had been greatly underutilized in Central Oregon, with less than 0.5% of the estimated tobacco users accessing the quit line.

Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division (OHA-PHD) has prioritized the e-referral functionality investment into the State Tobacco Quit Line to increase access of tobacco users to the quit line, which will greatly support cessation efforts, and ultimately reduce the number of tobacco users and greatly improve health outcomes statewide. OHA-PHD is working with partners across the state to support e-referral buildout implementation through investments in local and state systems.

E-referral Pilot Project

In partnership with multiple Central Oregon agencies, Deschutes County Health Services secured Quality Incentive Measure (QIM) funding from their local Coordinated Care Organization, PacificSource Community Solutions, and the Central Oregon Health Council to make electronic referrals (e-referrals) to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line possible. This funding supported OCHIN Epic EHR functionality within clinics in Central Oregon. Additional funding was provided by OHA-PHD to Optum, the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line contractor, to be able to accept referrals via the OCHIN Epic EHR system. Additional key partners in this project include Mosaic Medical, La Pine Community Health Center, Crook County Health Department, and Jefferson County Health Department. Before this project was initiated in Oregon, only fax referrals could be made to the Quit Line.

The e-referrals project was completed in August 2017, and to date the project has already demonstrated a significant increase in referrals to the quit line. At the nine central Oregon clinics where the e-referral functionality was implemented, 207 referrals were made to the Tobacco Quit Line between August 2017 and January 2018. This is compared to 5 referrals during the same period the prior year. This is over a 4,000% increase in referrals.

This e-referral project has enabled partners in Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson counties who utilize the OCHIN Epic electronic health record to interface with the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line for telephonic counseling and medications to help patients quit using tobacco. As a result of this project, the interface is now a closed loop referral, meaning the outcome of the referral is communicated back to the referring provider with cessation medications imported back into the individual's electronic health record.

For questions about this pilot project, please contact Tom Kuhn, Community Health Manager at Deschutes County Health Services, at (541) 322-7410 or Thomas.Kuhn@deschutes.org with questions.

Next Steps for OCHIN EPIC Health Systems

If you are interested in turning on the e-referral functionality within your OCHIN EPIC system and are a current OCHIN EPIC member, please contact OCHIN directly and enter a support ticket (Interface JIRA) to initiate the conversation. As a result of this initial buildout, there will be minimal costs for any OCHIN EPIC health system, which may vary depending on internal technology capacity.

Next Steps for Health Systems using other EHR systems

For general questions about how to get started with e-referral buildouts to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line, please contact Shira Pope, Health System Policy Specialist, Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention, 971-673-1052, shira.r.pope@state.or.us.