

Tobacco Cessation Electronic Referrals Frequently Asked Questions

What is an electronic referral?

An electronic referral is when a health system or clinic provides a patient referral from the electronic medical record (EMR) to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line. These patients have indicated that they are interested in quitting and they have consented to be contacted by the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line.

The referral is sent to the Quitline. Then, Quitline registration staff contacts these individuals to enroll them in available cessation services, similar to the fax referral process.

Why use electronic referrals?

Research indicates that provider referral of patients to tobacco cessation programs is associated with significantly higher participation rates than simply telling patients they should quit. Clinical teams, which include but are not limited to providers, nurses, medical assistants and traditional health workers can make a big impact on the lives of their patients and reduce health care costs by referring them to tobacco cessation services.

In the past, the only way a healthcare provider could refer patients to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line was to give them the Quitline phone number or a brochure. Fax referrals became one way to overcome this barrier, but in the age of electronic health/medical records (EMRs), physicians may no longer have a paper-based file for their patient. Electronic referral systems support seamless referrals of patients to tobacco cessation programs. This process lessens the burden on the health care provider or staff, who may not have time to sit with a patient to sign and complete a fax referral form and then later send it in.

By using an electronic health/medical record system to refer your patients to cessation resources, it assists your health system in achieving [Meaningful Use](#) and [Patient Centered Primary Medical Home](#) standards.

Who can use E-Referral Systems?

Any health system or a clinic utilizing an electronic medical record can submit electronic referrals to the Quit Line.

To utilize e-referrals, the health system must establish a secure connection to the Quitline. There may also be a requirement to build an interface which asks about tobacco use and allows a referral to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line to be made.

As a result, a health system or clinic that wishes to adopt an electronic referral system may need to commit staff time or resources to modify the EMR, supporting the required file format and building and testing the secure connection.

Who should be referred to the Quit Line using E-Referrals?

Tobacco users who are ready to quit may be referred to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line.

What Referral Methods does the Quitline support?

The Oregon Tobacco Quit Line supports the following standard methods of sharing electronic health information, allowing health systems to choose the method that works best for them:

- Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) Batch file
- HL7v2 with the following transfer method
 - HTTPs over VPN
- HL7v3 with the following transfer methods
 - Direct Messaging
 - Webservice with Certificate

What Happens after a Referral is Made?

Once the Quitline has received the file, it is uploaded into their system. Quitline staff make outbound calls within 24 hours of receiving a referral, and they make multiple attempts at the patient's best time over the next five days.

Outbound call phone numbers are as follows:

(800) QUIT-NOW
(866) QUIT-4-LIFE

Will Referring Clinics Receive Outcomes?

Referring clinics or health systems that are HIPAA covered entities may build "closed loop" referrals, allowing them to receive information back. Outcomes include information such as whether the patient was reached for services, their Quit Date, if they received NRT, and if so, what dosage of NRT they received.

What about HIPAA regulations?

The Oregon Tobacco Quit Line is HIPAA-covered entity. In this situation, the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line is another "provider" and the health system is sharing confidential health information for Treatment purposes.¹ Health systems and clinics must be HIPAA compliant to obtain outcomes back about the e-referrals they have sent the Quitline.

How do I get started?

If you are part of a health plan that contracts with Optum for telephonic counseling services, please contact the cessation coordinator at your health plan or your client services manager at Optum.

If you are with a health plan or health system that does not contract with Optum for tobacco cessation services, please contact Shira Pope at the Oregon Health Authority at 971-673-1052.

Visit www.smokefreeoregon.com/resources/referral-to-quit-for-health-systems-and-social-service-agencies for example E.H.R. workflows that ask patients if they use tobacco, advise them to quit, and refer them to cessation resources.

¹ <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/summary/index.html>