Mental Health Month

LTE Template

Drafted April 27, 2020

**Tobacco takes bigger toll on individuals with mental health concerns during COVID-19**

Dear Editor,

START YOUR LETTER BY SHARING THAT MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH, WHICH FOCUSES ON RAISING AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND REDUCING STIGMA. NOW STATE THAT TOBACCO ADDICTION HAS A MASSIVE IMPACT ON THOSE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS, ESPECIALLY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

SHARE THAT 25% OF WISCONSIN RESIDENTS DIAGNOSED WITH DEPRESSION CURRENTLY SMOKE COMPARED TO 16% OF THE GENERAL POPULATION. ALSO SHARE THAT ACCORDING TO THE CDC, 40% OF ALL CIGARETTES SMOKED BY ADULTS IN THE U.S. ARE SMOKED BY INDIVIDUALS COPING WITH A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CHALLENGE.

EXPLAIN THAT MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IS IMPORTANT NOW MORE THAN EVER AS THE CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS ADDING EXTRA STRESS AND ANXIETY TO EVERYONE, PARTICULARLY THOSE COPING WITH A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CHALLENGE. CIGARETTE SMOKE CAN SUPPRESS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM PUTTING A PERSON THAT SMOKES AT GREATER RISK FOR COVID-19, AND MAY MAKE IT HARDER TO RECOVER. FOR ANYONE DEALING WITH TRAUMA OR STRESS DURING THESE TIMES, IT IS CRUCIAL THEY RECEIVE THE PROPER SUPPORT THEY NEED.

USE THIS PARAGRAPH TO DISCUSS HOW THIS NEWS MAKES YOU FEEL (ANGRY, FRUSTRATED, SAD, ETC.). IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW DEALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER, DISCUSS HOW THAT IS HARD ENOUGH TO MANAGE WITHOUT THE ADDED STRESS OF TOBACCO ADDICTION.

DISCUSS WHAT YOUR NETWORK OR COALITION IS DOING LOCALLY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OR CONSIDER MENTIONING THE WORK OF THE WISCONSIN NICOTINE TREATMENT INTEGRATION PROJECT (WiNTiP) AND HOW IT HELPS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS INTEGRATE TOBACCO CESSATION INTO THE CARE THAT THEY PROVIDE. INCLUDE THAT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROGRAM AT HELPUSQUIT.ORG.

ENCOURAGE ALL TOBACCO USERS, REGARDLESS OF THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF A MENTAL ILLNESS AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TO CALL THE WISCONSIN TOBACCO QUIT LINE AT 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) FOR FREE HELP QUITTING TOBACCO. FOR HEALTHY COPING OPTIONS DURING COVID-19, ANYONE CAN VISIT THE [RESILIENT WISCONSIN WEBPAGE](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/resilient.htm) ON THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES’ WEBSITE. LET READERS KNOW THAT THEY CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT LOCAL EFFORTS AT **(NETWORK/COALITION WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE)**.