



Sypris Technologies - Morganton, NC Supporting a New Tobacco-Free Policy with Benefits & Incentives

Smoking had always been permitted throughout the Sypris Technologies manufacturing plant in rural Morganton, North Carolina. It was a regular routine for many of their 250 employees to smoke during breaks—on the operations floor, in the break room, or outside the building. Over time, however, the leadership at Sypris started to recognize the health risks and costs related to employee tobacco use and implemented a campus-wide tobacco-free policy. The story doesn't stop there, however. Providing many benefits and incentives for employees to quit the use of tobacco has been a critical part of Sypris's success. Occupational Health Nurse Robin Carswell and HR Director Jennifer Nicholes agreed to share the tobacco cessation supports that have helped Sypris to be successful during this change process, as well as several tips for worksites implementing a new tobacco-free policy.

Tobacco-Free Benefits & Incentives

Counseling

- Tobacco cessation programs conducted by Nurse Robin Carswell are offered to support employees who are committed to quitting
- Spouses of employees are invited to attend on-site cessation programs
- Employees who have quit using tobacco offer their stories of struggles and successes to inspire people currently in the cessation programs

QuitlineNC

- QuitlineNC offers an opportunity for employees to access anonymous cessation services.
- Brochures are available to employees throughout the manufacturing building

Health Insurance Benefits

- Health insurance premiums are lower for employees who identify as non-tobacco users or as tobacco users who have committed to tobacco cessation programs
- Tobacco users who are not attempting to quit pay an average of \$400 more per year in premiums

Prescription Medication & Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

- NRT prescription medications are made available to employees for free as part of health insurance benefits
- Reimbursement is offered for over the counter nicotine replacement therapies

Promoting Benefits

- Television monitors mounted throughout the facility provide a convenient way to make health and wellness announcements to all employees
- The tobacco-free policy is posted on Sypris's HR website and throughout the facility
- Information about the policy and insurance benefits is provided during employee orientation to all new employees



Signs posted around Sypris's campus alert employees and visitors of the tobacco-free policy.



Ongoing Challenges

Smokeless tobacco use remains a challenge at Sypris. Occupational Health Nurse Robin Carswell reports that employees using smokeless forms of tobacco often have a harder time quitting than those employees who smoke due to the higher levels of nicotine they receive. Because cessation programs typically place a greater focus on smokers, Carswell incorporates information on smokeless tobacco into her programs. This includes resources such as KillTheCan.org and mylastdip.com that educate employees on the use of tobacco-free snuff to help them quit.

Tips for Success

HR Director Jennifer Nicholes reports that rather than creating negativity at Sypris, the tobacco-free policy provided an opportunity for employees to cut back their tobacco use, if not quit altogether. Nurse Carswell offers three tips for other organizations aspiring to go tobacco-free campus-wide:

1. **Communicate that you are going to go tobacco-free campus-wide** and allow employees time to prepare. Anticipate resistance and prepare positive messages to gain support.
2. **Offer employees incentives**, such as insurance premium reductions, quitting aids, and reimbursement for tobacco cessation medications/OTC products. Offer on-site classes and online or phone-based resources.
3. **Maintain a positive atmosphere**. As a wellness leader in the company, Carswell wants employees to know that she is there to support them in their tobacco cessation efforts, not to punish them, for using tobacco.

“If someone smoked for 60 years, it is going to be really difficult to break the addiction,” says Carswell. “But if you offer them something to help them stop smoking, they will give it a chance. If employees don’t have the incentive to quit, then they probably aren’t going to try to quit.”

For more information, email us at:
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