

CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION & HEALTH PROMOTION

Talking Circles Alaska

**AUTHENTIC CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ENGAGEMENT IN
EVALUATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE ALASKA TOBACCO
QUITLINE IN ALASKA NATIVE COMMUNITIES**

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Kellie Jorgensen

Ja'Kyra Austin

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

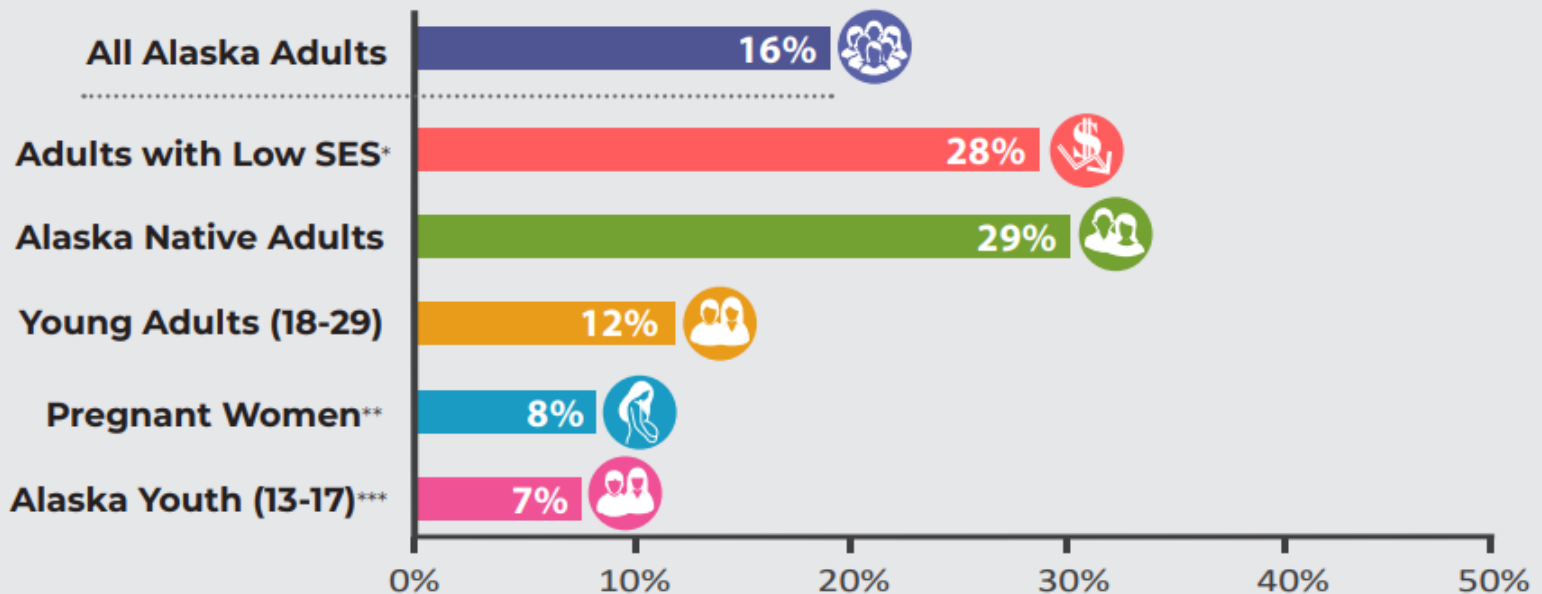
Session Learning Objectives

- Discuss disparities in quit line use and the role of Alaska Tobacco Quit Line in addressing these inequities
- Evaluate strategies and key findings related to quit line satisfaction and cessation services
- Explain how culturally responsive qualitative methods were used to identify barriers to cessation services in Alaska
- Apply insights from this evaluation to inform culturally relevant quit line strategies and service enhancements

Tobacco Disparities in Alaska

- Tobacco remains a leading cause of preventable death and illness in Alaska with **600** lives lost annually
- Higher burden among Alaska Native communities

Percentage of Alaska Priority Populations Who Smoke



Role of Alaska Tobacco Quitline



- Free, evidence-based tobacco cessation support
- Key component of Alaska's tobacco control strategy

Feedback and Concerns from Tribal Partners

- Tribal health partners relayed concerns about the quality, relevance, and utilization of ATQL

State of Alaska TPC worked to:

- Assess satisfaction with current ATQL services within Alaska Native Communities
- Identify barriers to cessation support services
- Ensure that evaluation questions are culturally relevant and informed by Tribal health partners

Methods of Evaluation

Instrument	Purpose	Type	Sample/Frequency	What it does	Limitations
ATQL Call Back Study	Evaluate Quitline effectiveness with enrollees	Program evaluation	1,018; every 5 years	Measures quit rates, satisfaction, and improvement needs	Not representative of statewide knowledge/behaviors
Online Adult Tobacco Survey (OATS)	Assess statewide tobacco knowledge, beliefs, behaviors	Surveillance	3,000; Annual	Tracks population-level trends	Does not evaluate Quitline effectiveness/satisfaction
Talking Circles	Gather feedback from Alaska Native communities	Listening circles (formative)	49 members + 19 professionals; one time project	Provides insight to tailor services and messaging	Not for statewide trends or population estimates

Quit Line Callback Utilization by Race

Estimated number of cigarette smokers in Alaska and ATQL annual utilization rates/

Categories		OATS % Cigarette Smoking [†]	# AK Cigarette Smokers	# AK Smokers Served by ATQL	% AK Smokers Served by ATQL	Utilization p-value
Alaska adults 18+		16.9%	94,700	3,740	1.8%	N/A
Individual characteristics						
Sex*	Female	16.5%	44,300	1,806	1.9%	0.000
	Male	17.3%	50,500	1,464	1.3%	
Age group*	18-29	14.1%	16,800	677	1.9%	-
	30-54	22.8%	55,400	1,001	0.8%	0.000
	55+	11.4%	22,600	1,612	3.3%	0.000
Race/ Ethnicity**	White non-Hispanic	12.6%	47,400	2,016	2.0%	-
	Any AN/AI	36.3%	36,400	608	0.8%	0.000
	Black/Asian/Islander/ Hispanic/Other	14.5%	11,300	485	2.0%	0.610

Key Findings of ATQL Call Back Study

- High satisfaction with ATQL services among study participants (76%)
- High percentage of enrollees would contact the quit line again for quitting support (85%)
- Satisfaction measures were similar across nearly all demographic groups (including Alaska Native and non-Native people).
- Similar success rates in quitting among Alaska Native and non-Native enrollees
- Conventional quit rates comparable to national average, (37% Alaska to 35% National in 2023)

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Culturally Responsive Evaluation Approach: Talking Circles

Why Talking Circles?

- Traditional and culturally relevant dialogue format
- Evidence Based Practice- [Listening Sessions](#)
- Emphasizes respect, listening, and shared voice
- Aligns with culturally grounded research methods

Evaluation Design

- ❑ Seven in-person Talking Circles
- ❑ Across Alaska's **seven public health regions**
- ❑ Participants included:
 - ❑ Tribal Health Organization professionals
 - ❑ Alaska Native community members
 - ❑ Individuals with lived experience using tobacco and attempting to quit



Explored:

- ❑ Awareness and Satisfaction with ATQL
- ❑ Barriers to quitline enrollment and/or other cessation services
- ❑ Preferred communication and outreach methods
- ❑ Quit coach preferences

Building Project and Partnerships

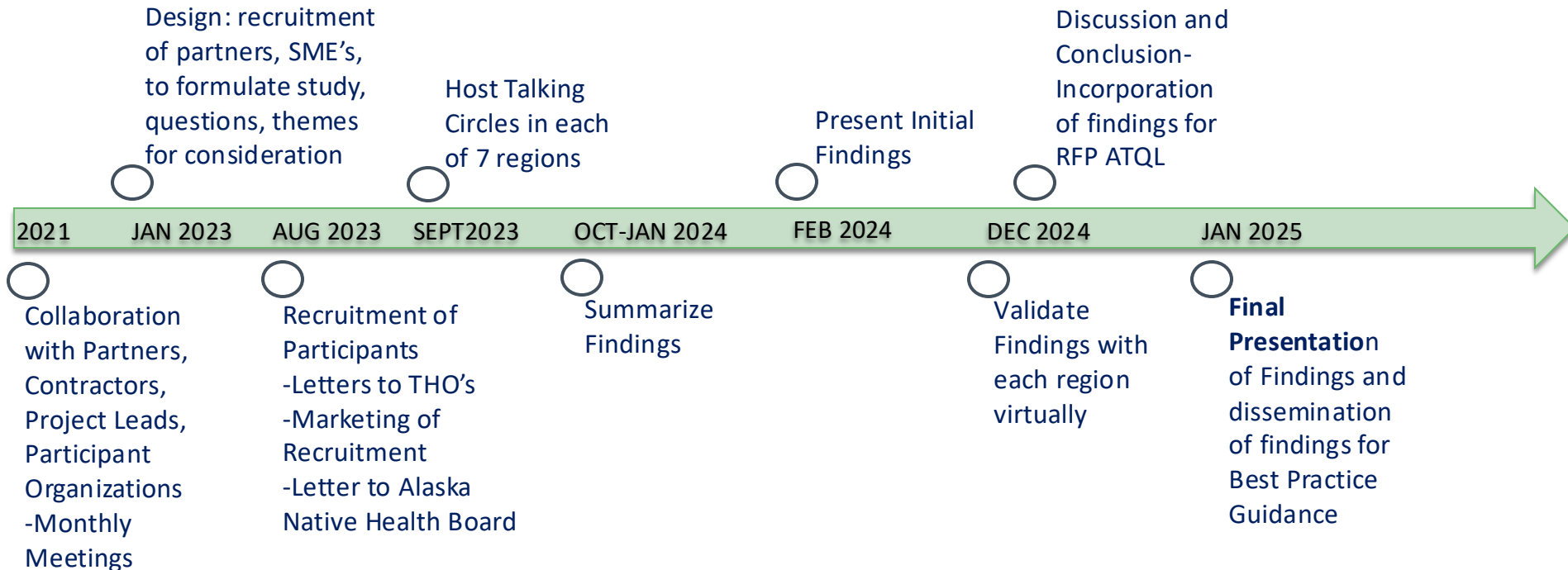
Partnerships

- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and Alaska Native Lead and Cessation Community of Practice
- Tribal Health Liaison and Contractor Denali Daniels and Associates
- Tribal Health Organization Directors, Alaska Native Health Board
 - Initial Zoom call to engage
 - Schedule on-site visits conducted at participating communities

Sample Questions posed by Contractor

- What is important for quit coaches to know in order to support people wanting to quit in your community?
- Think about your history, your culture, and values. When you think about those things, what would a quit line look like?
- What would a Quit Line look like to best serve Alaska Native people in your community?

Talking Circles Project Timeline



Findings for Tailoring Quitline Services

-  **Availability:** Live coaches be available 24/7 to talk with Alaskans the moment that they are ready to quit

-  **Accessibility and contact options via phone, text, online, in person:**
 - ▣ Continue accessibility in multiple modalities to include call, text, website, digital platforms.
 - ▣ Offer a virtual Alaska Native support group.
 - ▣ Offer referral to local in-person services and resources available to callers.

-  **Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) education and awareness:** Provide clear education on how to use NRT, explain benefits and potential side effects

Findings for Tailoring Quitline Services (continued)

-  **Cultural competency training for Alaska Native communities:** Provide coaches that are familiar with the caller's region, cultural norms, and day-to-day activities of their region.
-  **Dedicated coaching model:** Assign primary coaches at enrollment to support consistency and relationship building
-  **Motivation, engagement and encouragement:** Provide participants with tools to track their achievements. Offer incentives for reaching quitting milestones to increase motivation and reward sustained success. Use motivational interviewing.
-  **Cultural and language considerations:** Offer interpretation and translated materials in Native languages (i.e., Yupik). Train coaches in key phrases and words in Native languages to build trust and demonstrate understanding.

Key Takeaways

Talking Circles provided meaningful insights into Alaska Native experiences with the Quitline while highlighting culturally grounded opportunities to improve access and reduce barriers.

- Preference for coaches with lived experience quitting tobacco products and familiarity with Alaska and rural communities
- Services offered via multiple avenues (text, phone, web based, support groups) that is accesible 24/7
- Motivational interviewing techniques used to support participants using effective communication cadence and key phrases in native language to demonstrate understanding and build trusting relationships

Next Steps

- Use community voices to strengthen tobacco cessation support and reduce health disparities across Alaska.
- Further promote the ATQL and cessation services with culturally tailored media materials and outreach
- Create a tailored protocol for the Alaska Tobacco Quitline for Alaska Native Communities
- Provide enhanced patient navigation to support connections to local Tribal Health services as needs arise.

Questions?

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