



Bert Marshall  
President

## Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma

*Be Smart—Don't Start!*

### Coalition Leadership

American Lung Association of the Central States serving Oklahoma, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Department of Health

### Program Components

- *Be Smart-Don't Start!* Storyboard Contest, open to Oklahoma students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

### Program Highlights

- The *Be Smart-Don't Start!* Storyboard Contest is a drawing and writing contest in which students create a public service announcement (PSA) conveying a clear message about the dangers of smoking.
- The winning storyboards (one each from eastern and western Oklahoma) are produced as a PSA and provided to area media for airing.
- Program increases awareness in students about the dangers of tobacco products, and shares their views on the dangers of smoking with the general community, with the desired end result of fewer people becoming smokers.
- The program, which began in 2004, has distributed more than 500,000 storyboards to Oklahoma children. In 2010, more than 2,600 students participated in the contest.

More information is available at <http://www.bcbsok.com/dontstart.html>

“As a health insurance leader, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma believes that helping our members avoid preventable health problems is one of the best customer services that we can provide. The long-term effect is improved health for our members and enhanced fitness for our state.”

## Promoting and Supporting a

### Value Proposition

Despite decades of compelling science and increasing public awareness about the dangers of smoking, using tobacco products, and exposure to secondhand smoke, nearly one in five adult Americans still smokes cigarettes<sup>5</sup> and at least 8.6 million Americans are living with one or more serious illnesses related to cigarette smoking.<sup>7</sup> Direct medical costs from smoking-related conditions range from \$50–\$73 billion per year in direct medical costs, while indirect costs in terms of lost productivity are about \$4,430 per year for current smokers and \$3,246 per year for former smokers, compared to \$2,623 per year for people who never smoked.<sup>8,9</sup> In addition, even nonsmoking employees may have expensive smoke-related illnesses such as heart disease and lung cancer due to exposure to secondhand smoke.<sup>10</sup> Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to smoking tobacco and poses a significant health risk as a known cause of cancer, containing at least 28 carcinogens.<sup>11</sup> A recent report summarizes that smokeless tobacco use varied from 0.8 percent to 9.1 percent and from 0.9 percent to 13.7 percent reported smoking and using smokeless tobacco.<sup>12</sup>

### Business Case

Interestingly, only about 28 percent of smokers are advised by a health professional to quit and are offered medication or other assistance, despite the evidence that thousands of additional lives would be saved if such services were offered.<sup>13</sup> Individuals who quit using tobacco experience significant health benefits, including reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and cancer.<sup>14</sup> Smoking cessation interventions cost less than treating the array of potential smoking-related illnesses. It has been shown that the following approaches, if offered to all smokers, would save \$3 billion annually<sup>5</sup>:

- Community-wide campaigns
- Screen adults for tobacco use
- Provide brief counseling
- Provide coverage, with little or no copay or deductible, for both medication, including over-the-counter (OTC) medications, and counseling to assist with cessation



BlueCross BlueShield of Oklahoma  
Experience. Wellness. Everywhere.®

A Division of Health Care Service Corporation, a Mutual Legal Reserve Company, an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.