



## National Behavioral Health Network

for Tobacco & Cancer Control

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

# COVID-19: A Window of Opportunity for Taking Your Organization Tobacco-free

*“It’s the right thing to do and...it’s in our patients’ best interest.”*

-Mary Ward, President  
McLeod Addictive Disease Center

**Protect your clients and staff against serious COVID-19-related illnesses and improve overall health outcomes** by taking your mental health and substance use organization tobacco-free.

The effects of COVID-19 – both short- and long-term – can be worse for people who use tobacco due to existing lung damage and a suppressed immune system. Individuals with mental health and substance use (MH/SU) challenges use commercial tobacco at rates **two to four times** greater than the general population, putting them at [even greater risk for COVID-19-related morbidity and mortality](#).

Individuals with MH/SU challenges are increasingly [interested in quitting](#) due to greater health concerns and financial challenges brought on by COVID-19. So, this is a great time to increase efforts to take your organization tobacco-free and implement tobacco cessation services.



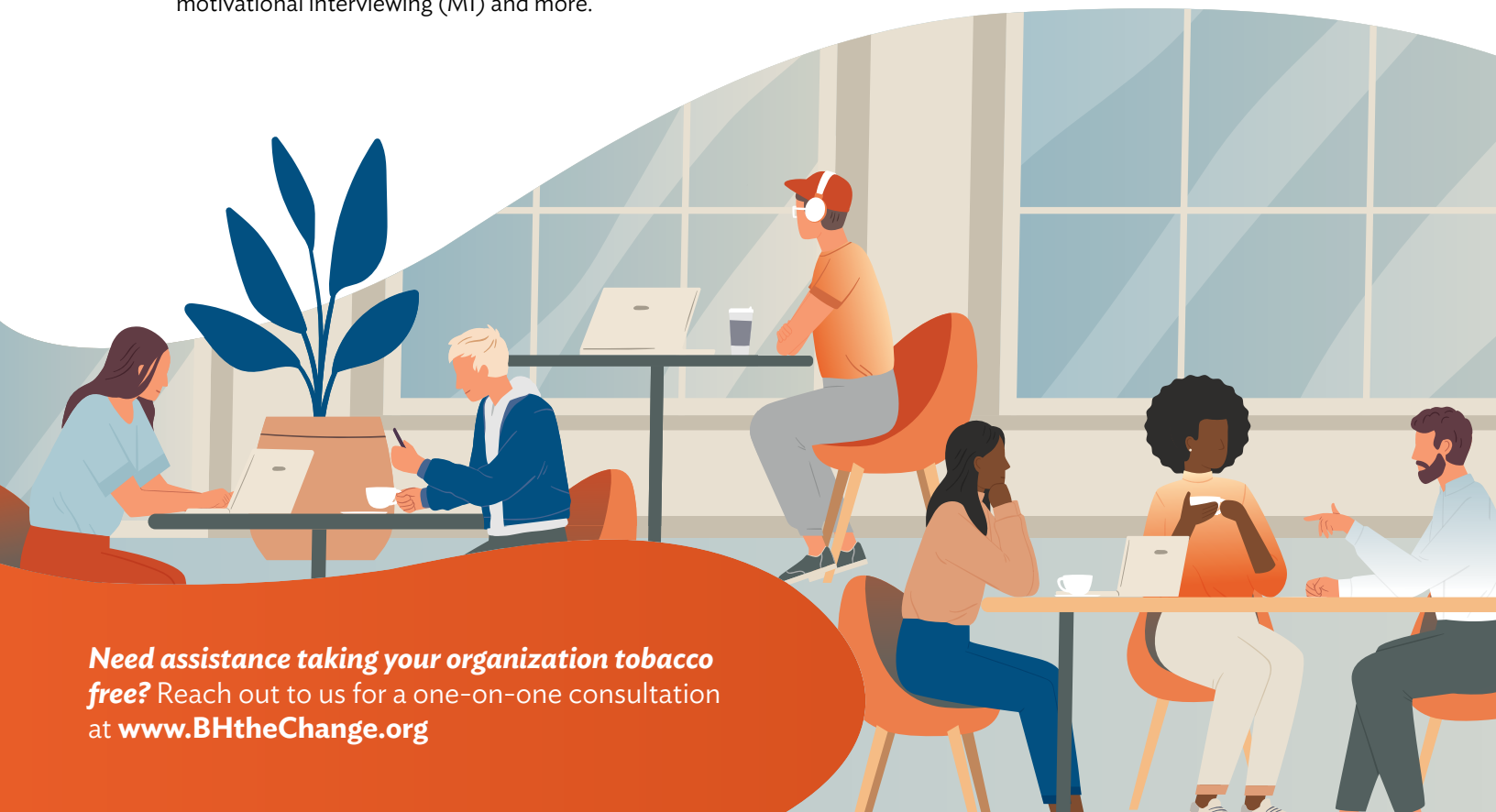


## WHY GO TOBACCO-FREE?

- Provide a safe and healthy environment by prioritizing lung health and wellbeing.
  - » Reduce secondhand smoke exposure for clients and staff and any who are survivors of COVID-19.
- Reduce the risk of transmission associated with sharing tobacco products among staff and clients.
- Reduce the overall risk of COVID-19 among clients who use tobacco.
  - » Quitting tobacco is the best defense against COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.
- Implementing a tobacco-free policy is just one of many post-COVID-19 workplace changes.

## RELATED RESOURCES:

- **[How To Implement a Tobacco-free Policy one-pager](#)**: Kickstart your efforts to go tobacco-free. Implement tobacco-free policies, engage staff, improve cessation services and sustain implementation success.
- **[Taking Your Facility Tobacco-free: A Brief Overview](#)**: Learn from case studies of success and find out how to make the case for return on investment (ROI).
- **[Dimensions: Tobacco-free Toolkit for Healthcare Providers](#)**: Information on tobacco cessation treatment services including screening and counseling, nicotine-replacement therapies, pharmacological supports, motivational interviewing (MI) and more.
- **[Tobacco-free Toolkit for Community Health Facilities](#)**: Draft an effective tobacco-free policy with the support of this toolkit.
- **[Transitioning to a Tobacco-free Facility](#)**: Resources and Sample Policies: Resources to support agencies plan and move toward a tobacco-free campus policy.
- **[A Conversation Around Addressing Organizational and Leadership Fears and Taking Facilities Tobacco-free](#)**: Mary H. Ward, president of the [McLeod Addictive Disease Center](#) shares first-hand experiences of taking her facility tobacco-free during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Need assistance taking your organization tobacco free?** Reach out to us for a one-on-one consultation at [www.BHtheChange.org](http://www.BHtheChange.org)