

# Cherokee Nation Public Health

## Public Health and Wellness Fund Act

### Section 1006.A: Smoking Cessation Fund

Annual Report  
FY 2025



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## Executive Summary

As required by Section 1006: “Smoking Cessation Fund,” the Cherokee Nation Public Health Department submits this annual report to update the Council of the Cherokee Nation on how funds were used in Fiscal Year (FY)2025, the impact of funded programs, and the overall effectiveness of these efforts.

The “Smoking Cessation Fund” helps reduce the harm of commercial tobacco use—including cigarettes and e-cigarettes—among Cherokee Nation citizens. Cherokee Nation Public Health utilizes these funds to implement evidence-based programs that prevent smoking and vaping, support people who want to quit, and reduce tobacco-related health disparities. This work supports three long-term goals:

- Strengthen and sustain smoking cessation services for adults and youth.
- Increase awareness of the harms of tobacco use and the wellness benefits of quitting.
- Improve data collection and evaluation to guide and improve programs.

With this dedicated funding, Cherokee Nation Public Health continues to be able to expand and enhance programs to better serve citizens struggling with nicotine addiction. Key FY2025 activities include:

- Delivering school-based and youth prevention programs with trained public health educators.
- Expanding cessation services to offer multiple quitting options for adults and youth.
- Prioritizing outreach to underserved communities with higher tobacco use rates.
- Enhancing data collection to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

These investments have increased access to services, raised public awareness, and strengthened public health’s ability to deliver evidence-based programs. Continued support is essential to sustain this progress, close health gaps, and build healthier citizens and communities across the Cherokee Nation.

## Introduction

It is known that smoking remains the leading preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the U.S. among all racial and ethnic groups, causing more than 480,000 deaths each year in the United States, emphasizing the urgent need for effective tobacco prevention and cessation efforts.<sup>1,2</sup> The act of smoking cigarettes harms virtually every organ in the body.<sup>4</sup> Despite this well-established risk, 15.8% of adults in Oklahoma smoked cigarettes in 2023, compared to only 10.8% of adults in the United States.<sup>5,6</sup> Furthermore, 22.9% of American Indians in Oklahoma were current smokers in 2023, more than 12% higher than the United States as a whole.<sup>7</sup> Each year in Oklahoma, approximately 8,400 youth under the age of 18 will try a cigarette for the first time.<sup>8</sup> Adolescents who are exposed to cigarette smoke are more likely to experience ongoing health challenges, such as bronchitis, pneumonia, and ear infections, which can affect their development and well-being.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, while cigarette smoking is declining, the three-year rolling prevalence of e-cigarette use among Oklahomans aged 18 to 24 increased by 6.8% between 2017 and 2023, reaching 26.7%. This trend underscores the continued need for targeted tobacco cessation efforts in the area.<sup>10</sup>

## Program Overview

Cherokee Nation Public Health's Tobacco Vaping Prevention and Cessation Program is dedicated to helping citizens live healthier lives and focuses on improving community health by reducing tobacco use, including commercial tobacco products such as cigarettes, vaping, and other smokeless tobacco products. We support tobacco-free living through community health education, outreach, access to quitting resources, and promoting commercial tobacco-free environments.

The Cherokee Nation Public Health Tobacco and Vaping Prevention and Cessation program's annual report was developed to highlight the work implemented across the four program goals of the 2023 – 2030 program plan while also adhering to the mission and vision of Cherokee Nation and the public health division.

A Vision for Wellness: ***To improve the quality of life for the next seven generations of Cherokee Nation Citizens.***

Cherokee Nation Public health addresses nicotine addiction as a key public health and wellness priority focused on preventing, promoting and protecting the health of our citizens and communities. A program logic model (**Table 1**) provides a snapshot and summary of key components of Cherokee Nation Public Health’s Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program that includes goals, objectives, and outcomes. The program is based on national tobacco prevention frameworks from The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Cherokee Nation Public Health and Wellness Fund Act (PHWFA Section 1006: Smoking Cessation Fund to ensure alignment with evidence-based strategies and outcome measures for tobacco and vaping prevention and cessation.

**Table 1: Cherokee Nation Public Health Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program Logic Model (2023-2030).**

Goal Statement - What do we want to achieve?			
<b>PROGRAM GOALS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 1: Reduce tobacco and smoking cessation related disparities and reduce commercial tobacco use prevalence among adults and youth.</li> <li>• Goal 2: Increase Cherokee Citizen’s awareness and knowledge related to the effects of all commercial tobacco use.</li> <li>• Goal 3: Expand and enhance programs and support that promote tobacco/vaping and smoking cessation among adults and youth.</li> <li>• Goal 4: Expand public health surveillance and strengthen evaluation and performance measurements to make informed decisions and improve programs.</li> </ul>			
Input What do we need?	Activities What do we want done?	Output What will we measure?	Outcomes What are the desired results?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff &amp; Partners (Tobacco program Coordinator, MSE, QI Team, etc.)</li> <li>• Funding and Resources</li> <li>• Media and Communications Platforms</li> <li>• Cherokee Nation Department/Programs, Community Partnership Networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach &amp; Education</li> <li>• Quit Kit Distribution</li> <li>• Education and Awareness Campaigns and Messaging development</li> <li>• Staff Training</li> <li>• Youth Tobacco and Vaping Prevention Programs</li> <li>• Adult Cessation Class</li> <li>• Registration Improvements</li> <li>• Virtual/In-Person Classes</li> <li>• Data Collection &amp; Evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated Website &amp; Media Products</li> <li>• Community Outreach Events Held</li> <li>• Quit Kits Distributed</li> <li>• School and Community Presentations Conducted</li> <li>• Expand and enhance Cessation Class offerings–               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Digital platforms for youth &amp; adults</li> <li>○ Nicotine Replacement Therapy offerings</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review and revise Tobacco Cessation Referral Process</li> <li>• Program Dashboards Created</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-Term Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased Awareness</li> <li>• Improved Access to Tobacco Prevention &amp; Cessation Services</li> <li>• Informed Decision Making when planning programs</li> </ul> <p><b>Intermediate Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased Participation in Programs</li> <li>• Improved Cessation Rates</li> <li>• Reduced Tobacco Use among youth and adults</li> </ul> <p><b>Long-Term Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced Tobacco Use Prevalence</li> <li>• Reduce Health Disparities among Cherokee Nation Citizens</li> </ul>

## Tobacco and Vaping Prevention and Cessation Programming

In compliance with our first goal of the program to reduce tobacco and smoking cessation use among adults and youth, Cherokee Nation Public Health has sustained access to cessation programs and activities by offering two virtual tobacco cessation classes monthly. In addition to four, in-person classes that are offered quarterly to Cherokee communities on the reservation. In FY 2025, there were a total of 60 tobacco cessation classes offered to adults. Cherokee Nation Public Health now offers the “N-O-T on Tobacco” program. N-O-T seeks to address the growing problem of tobacco use among teens by providing resources needed to help break nicotine addiction by finding healthier solutions and outlets.

## Tobacco Cessation Programs – FY25

Adult Tobacco Cessation	
7-week class series virtual/in-person opportunities	60
Smoking Cessation Class Participants	170
Completion of 7-week cessation program	56
Class participants that Quit Tobacco Use	37
Youth Tobacco Cessation	
Pilot Class Held	1
Participants	3

## Program Impact

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Cherokee Nation's Tobacco Cessation Programs maintained providing support for citizens seeking to quit tobacco use.

- **Adult Cessation Programs:** A total of 60 classes were offered across the Cherokee Nation reservation and to at-large citizens, engaging 170 citizens up from 83 participants in FY 2024. Of those, 56 participants successfully completed the seven-week program, with 37 achieving full cessation. These outcomes demonstrate both strong participation and meaningful impact in reducing tobacco use, a leading risk factor for chronic disease.
- **Youth Cessation Programs:** The NOT on Tobacco (N-O-T) program is a new addition to CNPH and our menu of program options for youth. The program was piloted on FY25 in preparation to fully implement in FY 26 and reached 3 youth participants.
- **Incentives to increase smoking cessation among Cherokee Nation employees:** In FY 2025, Cherokee Nation Public Health continued to provide a \$150 incentive to Cherokee Nation employees who are addicted to nicotine / tobacco products and completed the 7-week course. There were 79 Cherokee Nation employees that took the opportunity to take the cessation class. Of those 79 Cherokee Nation employees, 29 completed the program and received the \$150 gift card incentive.



- **Participants in the tobacco cessation program:** The data from FY25 indicates a 26% success rate, compared to the 47% success rate in the previous year. In FY 24 CN employees were offered a \$150 gift card for completing the cessation program likely contributing to the higher success rate. When calculating the FY 25 success rate for CN employees only the rate increases to 36.7% providing evidence that offering incentives contributes to the success rate of the program.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 8.8% of adults who attempted smoking cessation in 2022 were successful. CDC reports motivation to quit remain high at 67.7%, with 53.3% of users attempting to quit in 2022.

BMJ Open, a medical journal, reports research indicating the number of attempts before successful completion is around 30.<sup>15</sup> While quitting the use of cigarettes remains challenging, successful cessation proves possible after multiple attempts. Incentivizing appears to increase cessation attempts and consideration for 2026 includes broadening incentives for all citizens.

### Benefits of Quitting Smoking

In addition to improving the health of both individuals and the population, tobacco cessation also contributes to substantial cost savings. In Oklahoma, the average retail price for a pack of cigarettes is \$6.12, ranking the state 42nd in terms of cigarette cost among all U.S. states.<sup>11</sup> Smoking is estimated to cost the citizens in the state of Oklahoma approximately \$1.88 billion annually in direct health care expenses, including \$283.8 million in Medicaid expenditures.<sup>4</sup>

### Estimated Cost Savings Associated with Quitting Tobacco:

- Individual Daily Cost Savings: \$6.12 average cost per pack x 1 pack/day = **\$6.12 per day**
- Individual Monthly Cost Savings: \$6.12 per day x 30 days = **\$183.60 per month**
- Individual Annual Cost Savings: \$183.60 per month x 12 months = **\$2,203.20 per year**
- Individual Five-year Cost Savings: \$2,203.20 per year x 5 years = **\$11,016 per 5 years**
- Annual Cost Savings from Cessation Participants: \$2,203.20 x 37 participants who successfully quit tobacco = **\$81,518.40**

In addition to the cost of cigarettes, the impact that smoking has on health translates into a substantial financial burden on the US economy.

### Estimated Annual Economic Burden of Smoking:

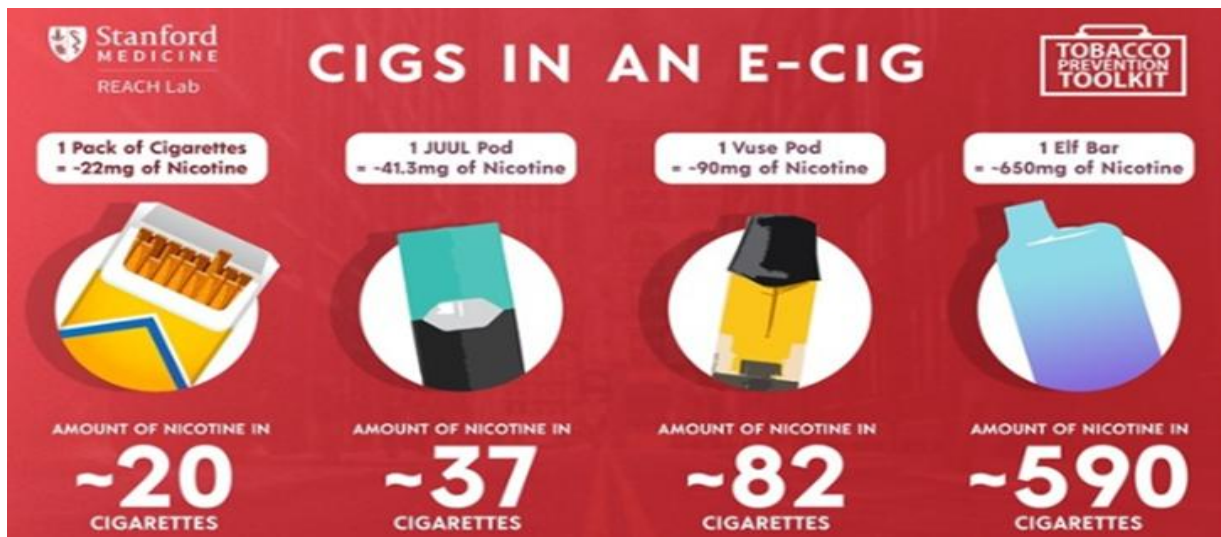
- Direct Healthcare Costs: **\$116.4 billion**
- Lost Workplace Productivity: **\$67.5 billion**
- Costs From Premature Death: **\$117.1 billion**

These factors combine to a total economic loss exceeding \$301 billion nationwide.<sup>12</sup> While the average price for a pack of cigarettes in the United States is approximately \$5.51, the true economic impact is significantly higher when considering broader societal impacts such as health care expenses, loss of productivity, and reduced quality of life. When accounting for these factors, the cost of cigarettes increases to an estimated \$18.05 per pack. Using the calculations above, the annual cessation participants' cost savings when accounting for broader societal factors come out to a significant annual savings per participant who quits.<sup>12</sup>

## Youth Engagement

According to Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET), approximately 21.7% of high school students in Oklahoma report using vape products---more than double the national average of around 10%---highlighting a significant public health concern among youth in the state.<sup>14</sup> Among youth who use electronic cigarettes, 43% report their initial use was driven by interest and curiosity about the product's flavor, scent, or design, underscoring the influence and aesthetic appeal on vaping initiation.<sup>13</sup> Misinformation persists among both youth and adults regarding the perceived safety of electronic cigarettes compared to commercial cigarettes.

The visual below from Stanford Medicine's REACH Lab reveals the equivalent number of cigarettes in each vaping product. On average, electronic cigarettes (vapes) contain higher levels of nicotine per use than commercial cigarettes, potentially increasing the risk of nicotine dependence. Some vapes even contain double the amount of a pack of commercial cigarettes.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 1: Stanford Medicine. (2025). Resources: Halpern-Felsher REACH Lab. Tobacco Prevention Toolkit. Stanford University School of Medicine.**

In late spring of 2025, all Cherokee Nation Public Health Educators were trained to facilitate and train others on the evidence-based youth vaping prevention program, CATCH My Breath. This



program was presented to youth programs during the summer and will be offered at public schools across the reservation in the fall of 2025.

Cherokee Nation Public health educators are also trained to facilitate two additional evidence-based programs for youth, NOT on Tobacco and INDEPTH. Both programs were created by the American Lung Association. Not On Tobacco is a cessation program for youth who are addicted to tobacco or nicotine products. NOT on Tobacco was implemented for the first time at Talking Leaves Job Corp in FY 2025. Baseline data was established and Job Corps' implementation of the NOT On Tobacco program is a valuable step towards addressing smoking cessation among its student population. INDEPTH is a program offered in school settings as an alternative to suspension when students are caught using tobacco or vaping while at school. This resource is available to schools on the reservation.

Through ongoing efforts to enhance Youth Engagement initiatives and key partners including the Healthy Cherokee TPWIC program, School Health and Wellness program, Comprehensive Cancer Control program, and the Cherokee Nation Tribal Youth Council and Education Department, the 2025 "Keep It Traditional Campaign" placed a powerful spotlight on tobacco prevention. This year's campaign honored the traditional and cultural use of tobacco while raising awareness about the dangers of commercial tobacco and vaping among Cherokee youth and young adults.

Throughout May, leading up to World No Tobacco Day, targeted social media posts amplified the message, with Tribal Youth Council members taking center stage. They shared hard hitting truths and highlighted the harmful effects of commercial tobacco use, giving the media campaign a face that was both relatable and impactful.

The momentum did not stop there. At the 2025 Know Your Nation Youth Summit, Cherokee Nation Public health educators presented a dynamic lesson from the CATCH curriculum to 132 Cherokee students in grades 6–12. The session covered essential topics such as resisting peer pressure, understanding the consequences of nicotine use, and recognizing its impact on overall health, reinforcing the campaign's mission to educate and empower.

Another area of focus is to increase access to tobacco cessation opportunities for young people. The EX Program® is a digital tobacco cessation resource based on evidence-based quitting approaches. The EX Program® employs a comprehensive nicotine addiction treatment to help youth 13 years and older and young adults quit smoking, vaping, or other nicotine product use. Developed with the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center and the Truth Initiative, it combines expert support and interactive tools through both digital and web-based forms. The EX Program® is the only proven quit-vaping program for teens, with results published in Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) showing a 35% increase in nicotine abstinence through its tailored text messaging feature. The EX Program® will help to expand access and options to effective cessation support for our citizens, particularly youth. It aligns with the program logic workplan goals of promoting tobacco-free lives. Implementation of EX Program® Essentials is set to begin on September 30, 2025.

## Community Outreach and Awareness

Cherokee Nation Public Health continues to participate in various community events on the reservation and at At-large community meetings to promote health education and awareness of tobacco prevention and cessation programs. There were 7154 attendees at the At-large meetings and tobacco prevention provided 750 quit kits. The quit kits provide materials that encourage citizens to quit commercial tobacco products.

In FY 2025, public health staff attended the following meetings:

2/8/2025 – Lakeland, FL	7/19/25 - Albuquerque, NM
3/15/25 - Kansas City	7/20/25 - Denver, CO
3/16/25 - Wichita, KS	8/2/25 - Salem, OR
4/5/25 - Washington, D.C.	8/3/25 – Seattle, WA
4/6/25 – Delaware Park, NJ	8/9/25 – Midwest City, OK
5/3/25 - Dallas, TX	9/20/25-San Marcos, TX
5/4/25 - Ft. Worth, TX	9/21/25-Houston, TX
6/28/25 - Atlanta, GA	

Public Health was also able to increase the number of tobacco prevention and cessation community outreach and awareness events implemented in this fiscal year which included the following:

### **GASO (Great American Smoke Out) - November 21, 2024**

The Great American Smoke Out occurs yearly on the third Thursday of November. Cherokee Nation Public Health Educators set up informational booths in their local community on this day to raise awareness of the dangers of smoking and vaping and provide information on the cessation treatments that are available. Public Health Educators gave out quit kits, educational material, and information about our tobacco cessation classes along with resource information on the 1800-QUIT-NOW line. The event produced the most Facebook views with 20,346 along with 192 likes and 56 people shared the content on the page.

### **Through with Chew Week – February 16-22, 2025**

Cherokee Nation Public Health promoted Through with Chew Week by setting up tables in communities across the reservation to provide information on the negative health effects of smokeless tobacco or “chew.” Educational materials and 163 quit kits were provided along with

flyers for our tobacco cessation classes. The event garnered over 2,265 Facebook Views, 14 likes, and 5 shares.

### Take Down Tobacco Day – April 1, 2025

Take Down Tobacco Day is a National Day of Advocacy that aims to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use, expose the strategies used by the tobacco industry to attract young people (like flavored products), and advocate for change. This is a day where young people can actively participate in advocacy efforts. Cherokee Nation Public Health tobacco prevention coordinator and public health educators went to schools across the reservation area educating youths on the dangers of smoking, vaping, and smokeless tobacco/nicotine use. Students signed banners and shared their reasons for being tobacco free. Over 700 youth were involved across the reservation. Take Down Tobacco Day was our second largest Facebook viewed event with 5,272 Facebook views, 80 likes, and 4 shares.



### World No Tobacco Day – May 31, 2025



World No Tobacco Day is held around the globe yearly on May 31<sup>st</sup>. It was created to raise awareness about the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocate for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. Cherokee Nation Public Health collaborated with Cherokee Nation Communications Departments, Cherokee Nation Tribal Youth Council, and Cherokee Nation Tribal Practices and Wellness in Indian Country to promote our Keep It Traditional campaign. The Keep It Traditional campaign promotes a cultural message that tobacco is sacred to our people and that cigarettes, chew, and e-cigarette vaping are not the traditional healing tools our ancestors wanted for our health. Our tribal youth council recorded small educational videos that were shared on social media to educate youth on the

dangers of vaping and the traditional use of tobacco. Tobacco cessation quit kits, educational material on traditional vs commercial tobacco, and Keep It Traditional t-shirts were provided to community members across the reservation that participated in the events hosted by Cherokee Nation Public Health Educators. The event produced 3,197 Facebook views, 39 likes, and 17 shares.

### **The Greenwood Cultural Center- May 28, 2025**

By executive order 2020-05-CTH Order of Equality, Cherokee Nation Public Health is identifying and working with marginalized communities within the reservation. Cherokee Nation Public Health partnered with the North Tulsa Cherokee Community Organization (NTCCO) to host the “World No Tobacco Day” at the Greenwood Cultural Center in Tulsa, OK. On this day Cherokee Nation Public Health successfully engaged 24 community participants to educate them about tobacco industry tactics and the harmful effects of tobacco use.



### **Partnerships**

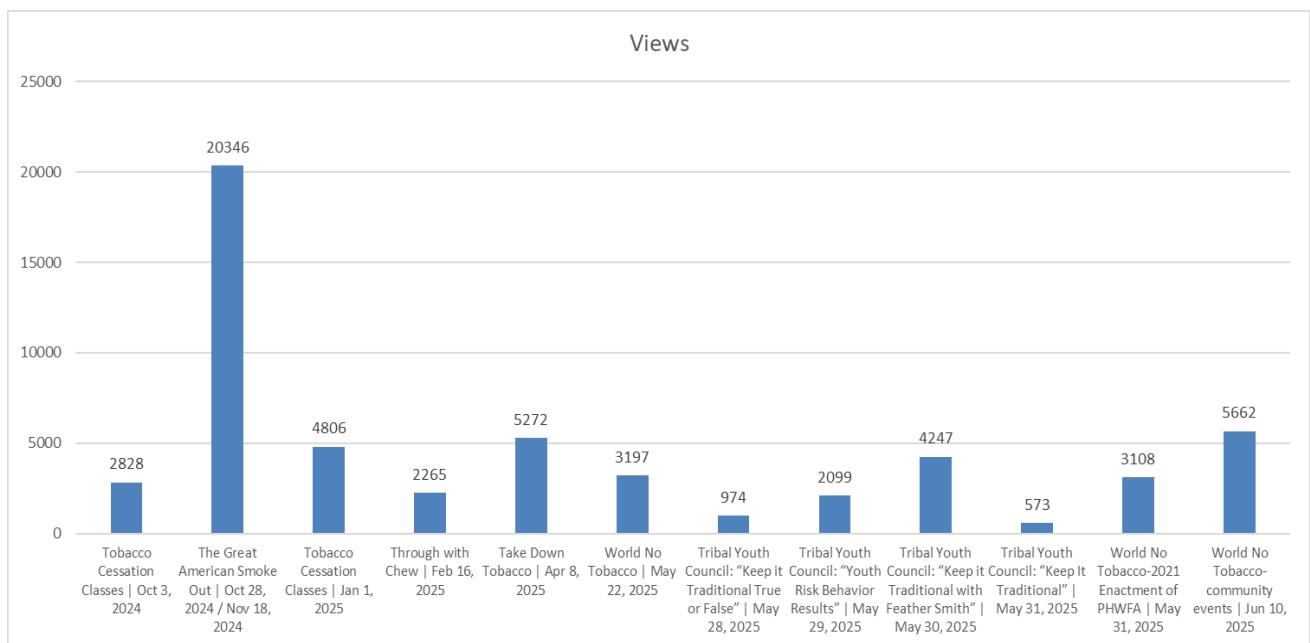
Cherokee Nation Health Services (CNHS) is leading the way in the Lung Cancer Screening study in conjunction with the Lung Cancer Screening Tribal Oklahoma (LST-OK). This is an intervention on medically based evidence to help in the reduction of deaths from lung cancer in American Indian and Alaskan Natives. In this collaboration with the LST-OK, Cherokee Nation Public Health serves on the studies’ community advisory board, representing tobacco cessation programs and services. Along with other Cherokee Nation entities, the goal is to establish community-based lung cancer screening programs that will lay the foundation for future research and healthcare for all Cherokee citizens. The role Cherokee Nation Public Health will support the study is by identifying strategies to expand and improve CNHS clinic referrals, thereby increasing patient access to tobacco cessation programs and resources. This can include connecting patients to Cherokee Nation Public Health, Cherokee Nation Public Health Educators, or Cherokee Nation

Public Health tobacco cessation facilitators, and other services provided by the Cherokee Nation Public Health department.

### Social Media Awareness

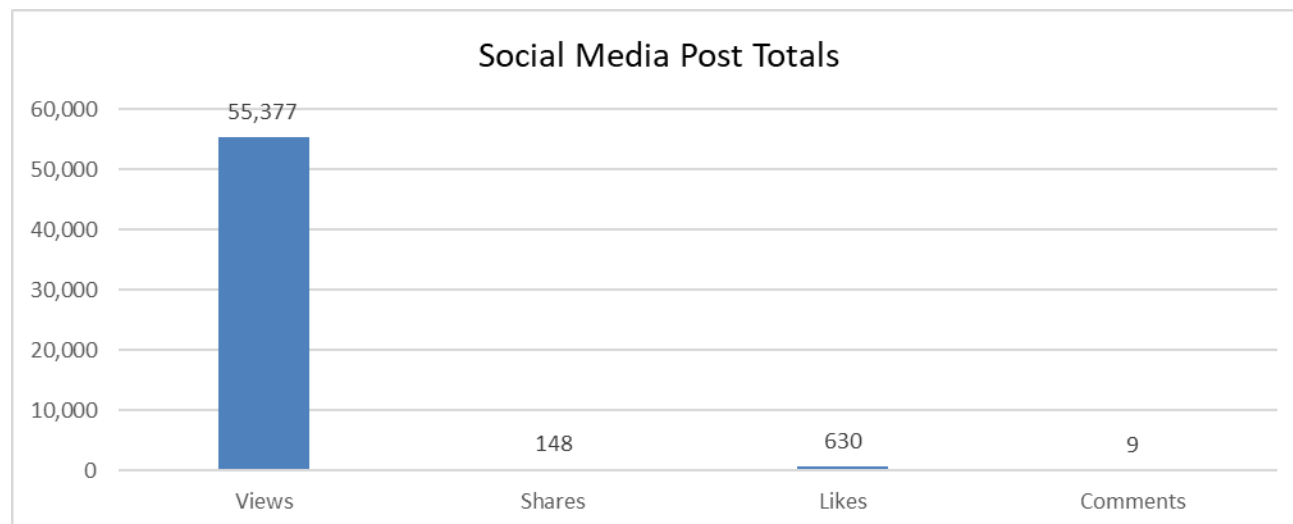
Cherokee Nation Public Health continued to promote health education and awareness information across available Cherokee Nation social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube and approved program website to promote tobacco and vaping prevention and cessation in FY2025, with 12 social media posts developed that had 55,377 views, 148 shares, 630 likes, and 9 comments.

**Chart 1: Social Media Views FY25**





**Chart 2: Social Media Posts Totals FY25**



### **Monitoring, Surveillance, and Evaluation**

To address our program Goal 4 to expand public health surveillance and strengthen evaluation and performance measurements to make informed decisions and continuous program improvement, the Monitoring, Surveillance, and Evaluation (MSE) works to interpretate analyze and data, which is essential to guiding evidence-based public health decisions and strengthening the development of tobacco cessation initiatives. These efforts play a critical role in maintaining a diligent watch on trends and changes within the Cherokee reservation. This data collection effort utilizes publicly available data sources to identify population needs and identify systemic barriers affecting communities within the Cherokee Nation Reservation.

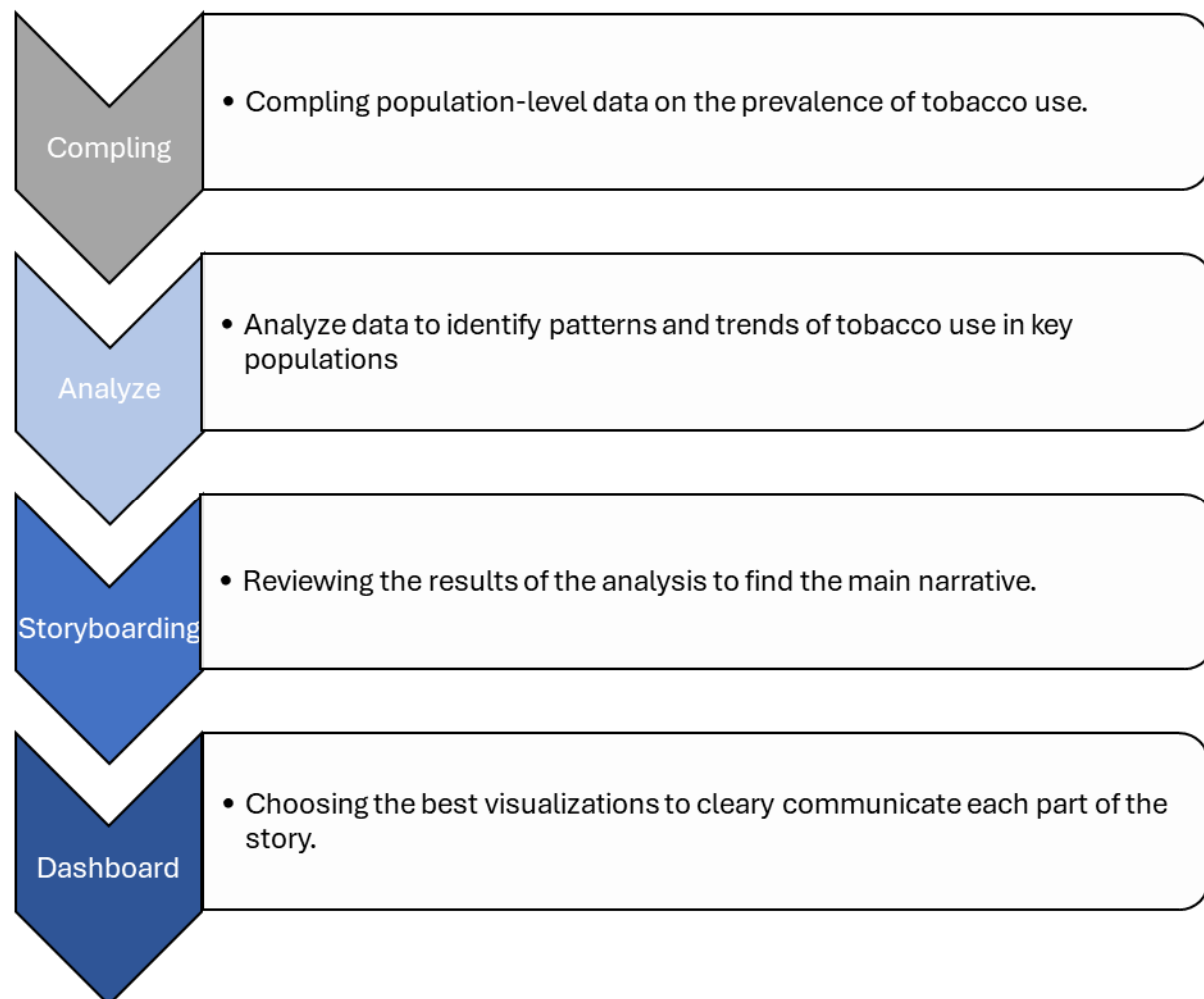
### **Dashboarding**

One of the key accomplishments of the program’s Monitoring, Surveillance, and Evaluation efforts in FY 2025, was the development of Tobacco Dashboards. The dashboards serve as essential tools utilized for translating complex public health data into accessible insights, enabling the program to monitor trends, identify disparities, and support informed decision-making based on evidence.

The development of the tobacco dashboard followed a structured four-step process. The first step involved compiling population-level data on the prevalence of tobacco use. Bringing all the

available data together made it easier to organize and prepare for analysis. In the second step, the compiled data was analyzed to identify patterns, trends, and key populations of interest. The third step, known as storyboarding, involved reviewing the results of the analysis to find the main narrative that the data reveals. Finally, the fourth step focuses on creating the dashboard. This includes choosing the best visualizations to clearly communicate each part of the story, based on the types of statistics available and the ideas that each statistic was meant to convey, and assembling them within the dashboard platform. This structured dashboarding process brings together data from multiple sources and transforms a large set of numbers, which can initially seem overwhelming, into a clear, actionable story that is available to help inform leadership, policymakers, and program directors of ongoing changes.

**Figure 2: Creation of the Tobacco Dashboard**



## **Conclusion**

Through the PHWFA Smoking Cessation Funds public health continues to make significant strides in improving the health and wellness of our citizens and communities. These investments have expanded access to tobacco and vaping prevention and cessation programs, raised public awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and strengthened our Public Health Department's infrastructure and capacity to deliver evidence-based programs and services that address commercial tobacco use and nicotine addiction. This progress reflects more than numbers, it represents improved lives, families support and communities moving toward a healthier future. Continued support is essential to maintaining this momentum, reducing health disparities, and reaching our vision for wellness: To improve the quality of life for the next seven generations of Cherokee Nation Citizens.

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