



# Development of a Tailored Semi-structured Interview Guide for Adults who Smoke and want to Quit with Text Messaging



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**Qualitative research methods will illuminate how the Pennsylvania Quitline Text Messaging Program will help to inform mHealth interventions related to service engagement and cessation rates among African American individuals who smoke.**

## BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study was to develop and refine a semi-structured interview guide to learn about the unique experiences of enrollees to the Pennsylvania (PA) Quitline text messaging program.

We hypothesize that qualitative research methods will illuminate how these services improve quit rates and may hold vital information for targeted smoking cessation interventions among African American individuals who smoke. Our focus is on text messaging, based on preliminary data indicating this was a promising technique.

Cigarettes are used by over 34 million U.S. adults and cause more than 480,000 deaths annually. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced a proposed product standard to ban menthol cigarettes.

This ban may cause an increase in utilization of quitlines; however, few studies have been conducted among Black adults who use quitline services to ask about the challenges they experience during a quit attempt.

To develop and refine a semi-structured interview guide for those who want to quit, we evaluated questions with PA Quitline enrollees.

## METHODS

In this qualitative and mixed methods study, individuals who enrolled in PA Quitline services were invited to complete a screener. Eligible participants were called to confirm their interest and scheduled to meet via Zoom for an interview. Consent was obtained and compensation was provided. The guide is being used in a larger study of 64 participants. This study was approved by our Institutional Review Board.

The guide included a script for the interviewer with consent to record the conversation (audio only), and questions divided into six categories: 1) past quit attempts, 2) perspectives on use of the PA Quitline and its text messaging service, 3) use of technology, 4) interactions with health care provider, 5) experiences with other addictive substances, and 6) suggestions for improvement of the PA Quitline.

## RESULTS

In May 2024, the guide was tested with 10 participants who were primarily Black adults (80%), identified as female (70%), completed some college (40%), and had a mean age of 50 years (SD: 15.8, range 20-65).

While some participants needed assistance with connecting to the researcher via Zoom, once connected they were willing to share challenges with quitting.

After assessing the format of the guide, we made changes to ask participants quantitative questions about smoking behaviors first and subsequently asked more in-depth (open-ended) questions.

## Table 1. Sample of Interview Guide Questions for Qualitative Research

*Hello! My name is [Name of PI or study team member]. I am a researcher at the Penn State College of Medicine. Thank you for your interest in participating in our study! The interview should take about 30 minutes. Is this still a good time to talk? Today, we will be asking a few questions about your experiences with using the text messaging program of the Pennsylvania (PA) Quitline and your experiences with any attempts you have made to quit smoking. Your responses to this interview will be confidential. Additionally, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I will be asking today. We want to learn about your unique experience. We will be audio recording this conversation for transcription purposes and so I can focus on your responses. Please do not provide identifiable information about other individuals in your responses. Do you consent to being recorded for this interview?*

*I'd like to start off by having you...*

1. Tell me about your journey with trying to quit smoking.

*We know that quitting is really difficult and would like your perspective on using the Pennsylvania (PA) Quitline.*

2. Tell me about your experiences with using the PA Quitline.

*Now I'm am going to ask you questions about the PA Quitline text messaging service.*

3. What prompted you to use the PA Quitline text messaging service?

*Now, I am going to ask you questions about your use of technology in your daily life.*

4. Tell me about how you use your phone in your daily life.

*Now I am going to ask you questions about interactions with your health care provider.*

5. Tell me how you keep track of suggestions during interactions with your doctor?

*Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions that relate to your experiences with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. These responses will help us to develop smoking cessation technology for those who use tobacco with other substances.*

6. Tell me about your use of alcohol in the past year.

7. Tell me about your use of tobacco in the past year.

8. Tell me about your use of prescription drugs for non-medical reasons in the past year.

9. Tell me about your use of cannabis (marijuana) in the past year.

10. Tell me about your use of other addictive substances.

11. Are there any other substances or drugs that I have not mentioned that you would like to discuss?

12. What suggestions do you have for improving the PA Quitline text messaging program?

13. Is there anything else about smoking and the PA Quitline that you would like to share with us?

14. Do you have any questions for me?

## CONCLUSION

Few studies have developed and tested an interview guide to collect the challenges and responses of adults who smoke and want to quit.

This study has implications for the design of smoking cessation interventions and demonstrated the feasibility to reach Black adults.

Future research should consider recruitment strategies to include Black male adults who smoke.

## ADDITIONAL KEY INFORMATION

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