



A practical guide with an overview of youth nicotine usage, example policies and resources for prevention, cessation services and training opportunities.

Nicotine-Free Schools Toolkit

Implementing School-Based Policies to Address Tobacco and Nicotine Use

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Background..... | 4 |
| 2. What are Tobacco Products and ENDS?..... | 5 |
| 3. Prevalence of Tobacco/Nicotine Products among Youth..... | 8 |
| 4. Nicotine-Free School Policy Assessment and Review..... | 9 |
| 5. Educate and Empower Quitting..... | 11 |
| 6. Community Resources..... | 13 |

Background

This toolkit is intended for schools, grades K-12, to use as a practical guide to raise awareness of the issues related to youth nicotine usage, provide example policies and resources for prevention, cessation services and share training opportunities provided by the Southeastern PA Tobacco Control Project.

Goals for this toolkit:

- Provide information on tobacco and nicotine products, its health effects and current youth usage rates
- Encourage schools to assess their current tobacco/nicotine use policy and, if needed, update existing policy to include language that captures all tobacco and nicotine products
- Offer schools/community partners training opportunities available to help facilitate tobacco education and prevention efforts at schools
 - ◇ American Lung Association's INDEPTH (Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health) is an alternative to suspension or citation program.
 - ◇ American Lung Association's N-O-T (Not on Tobacco) is a vaping and tobacco/nicotine cessation program
 - ◇ Catch My Breath vaping prevention program
 - ◇ Advocacy Institute youth engagement and advocacy program

About the Southeastern Pennsylvania Tobacco Control and Prevention Program

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Tobacco Control Project (SEPA TCP) is funded through a grant by the [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#) (PA DOH) and is operated by the [Health Promotion Council](#) (HPC), an affiliate of [Public Health Management Corporation](#). The program provides tobacco cessation, prevention, and enforcement services in the following counties: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Montgomery, and Schuylkill. Visit sepatobaccofree.org for more information.



Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products

What is tobacco?

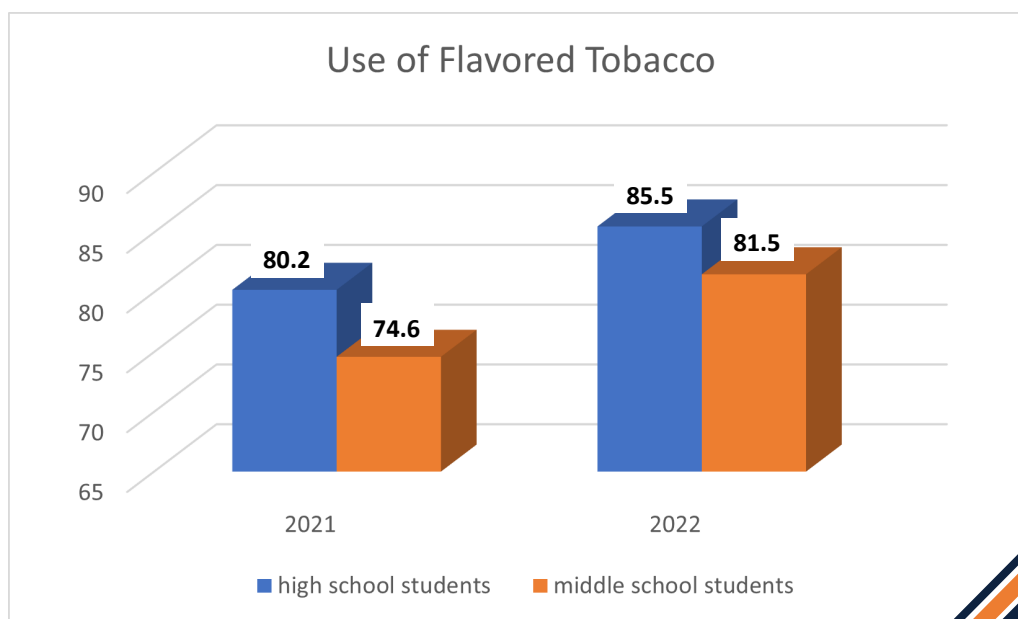
In Indigenous and Native American cultures, tobacco leaves are grown and used in traditional ceremonies. However, this toolkit is referring to commercial tobacco, grown and distributed by Big Tobacco companies for recreational use. Tobacco contains nicotine, an addictive ingredient that makes it difficult to quit. People can smoke, chew, or sniff tobacco. Smoked tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, bidis (hand-rolled in tendu leaf), and kreteks (clove cigarette). Some people also smoke loose tobacco in a pipe or hookah (water pipe). Chewed tobacco products include chewing tobacco, snuff, dip, and snus; snuff can also be sniffed.

Commercial tobacco, even if not heated, still contains added chemicals that can damage the body. Some of the harmful or cancer causing chemicals found in tobacco products or created by burning it include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Formaldehyde (carcinogenic) | Hydrogen Cyanide |
| Lead | Arsenic (carcinogenic) |
| Ammonia | Benzene (carcinogenic) |
| Carbon Monoxide | Polonium-210 (a radioactive chemical element) |

There is no safe tobacco. Preventing tobacco product use among youth is critical to ending the tobacco epidemic in the United States.

Tobacco use is started and established primarily during adolescence. Nearly 9 out of 10 adults who smoke cigarettes daily first tried smoking by age 18, and 99% first tried smoking by age 26. Each day in the U.S., about 1,600 youth smoke their first cigarette and nearly 200 youth start smoking every day. Flavorings in tobacco products can make them more appealing to youth, causing an increase in use. *Source: CDC.gov*

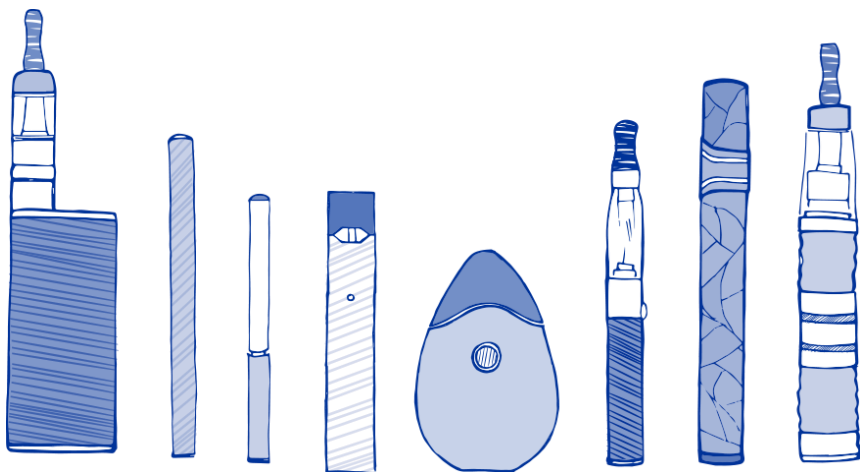


Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)

E-Cigarettes and Other Vaping Products

Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) are battery-powered vaporizers that simulate the action and sensation of smoking by allowing users to inhale aerosolized liquid.

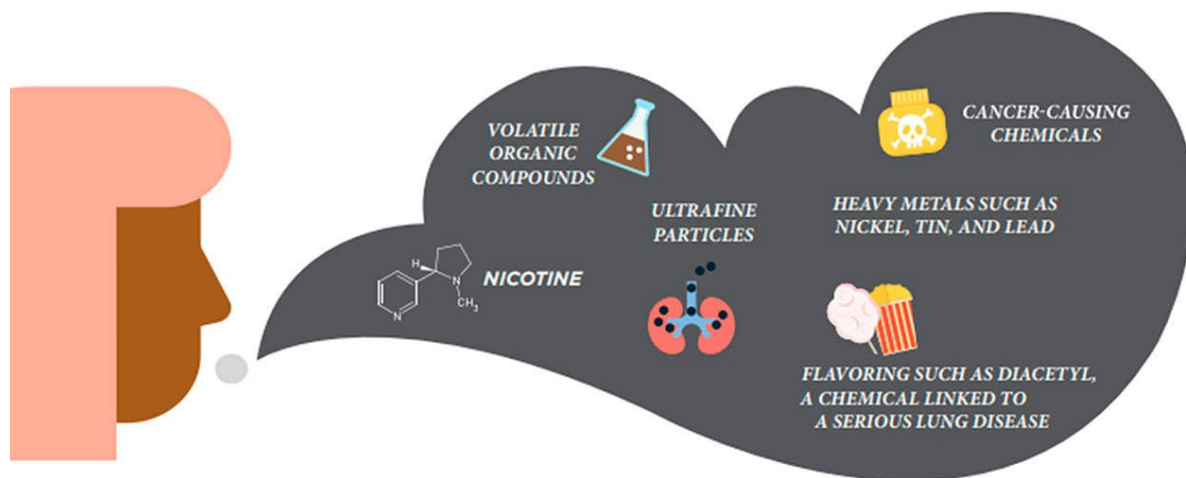
Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems are commonly known as **e-cigarettes** but are also known by a variety of other names such as; e-cigs, vapes, vape pens, e-hookahs, tanks, mods, e-pipes, and more. Some e-cigarettes are simply known by their brand name such as Puffbar, JUUL, or Sourin Drop.



Some ENDS are made to look like regular cigarettes, larger devices such as tank or mod systems do not resemble other tobacco products, and some resemble everyday items such as pens and USB sticks. ENDS contain a battery, a heating element, and a place to hold a liquid; they can be disposable or rechargeable. Additionally they can be closed systems where a pre-filled cartridges or pods are inserted or open systems which require the user to add an e-liquid.

What are in ENDS products?

ENDS create an aerosol by using a battery to heat up liquid that most commonly contains **nicotine**, flavorings, and other additives. Nicotine is the highly addictive substance found in traditional tobacco products; no amount of nicotine is safe. Users inhale this aerosol into their lungs, commonly mistaken for water vapor, and exhale. The aerosol can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances including:



It is difficult for consumers to know what e-cigarette products contain, due to the large variety of products and less regulation of ENDS. Some e-cigarettes marketed as containing zero percent nicotine have been found to contain nicotine.

The Problem

According to the CDC e-cigarettes are not safe for youth, young adults, pregnant women, or adults who do not currently use tobacco products.

Known [and Unknown] Concerns

Brain development & behavioral changes

According to the Surgeon General, because the brain is not fully developed until the mid 20's, youth and young adults are uniquely at risk for long lasting effects of exposing their developing brains to nicotine. These risks include addiction, mood disorders, and permanent lowering of impulse control. Nicotine also changes the way synapses are formed, which can harm the parts of the brain that control attention and learning.

Addiction

ENDS contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance.

Toxic and cancer causing chemicals

ENDS contain harmful and potentially harmful chemicals such as:

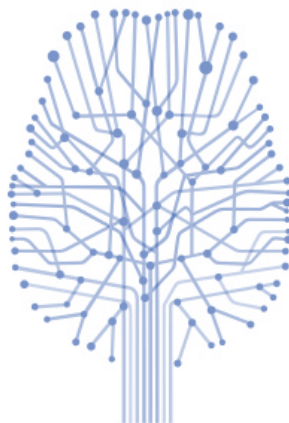
- ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs
- flavorings, which are safe for ingestion but not known to be safe for inhalation. For example, diacetyl, a common flavoring is known to cause lung disease.
- volatile organic chemicals like benzene, commonly found in car exhaust

ENDS are still fairly new products, therefore all of the long term effects of the components of these devices are not yet known.

Are ENDS safer than traditional cigarettes?

Yes, but safer does not mean safe. ENDS generally contain fewer than the 7,000 deadly chemicals found in cigarette smoke. However, ENDS aerosol is not harmless. It is recommended that youth, young adults, pregnant women, and anyone who is not currently using traditional tobacco products does not begin using ENDS.

**Until about age 25,
the brain is still
growing.**



Rates of Current Tobacco Use Among Youth

| Current Tobacco Product Use Among High School Students in 2022 | | | |
|--|---------|-------|-------|
| Tobacco Product | Overall | Girls | Boys |
| Any tobacco product | 16.5% | 17.6% | 15.3% |
| Electronic cigarettes | 14.1% | 15.4% | 12.8% |
| Cigarettes | 2.0% | 1.8% | 2.3% |
| Cigars | 2.8% | 2.1% | 3.5% |
| Smokeless tobacco | 1.6% | 0.9% | 2.3% |
| Hookah | 1.5% | 1.3% | 1.7% |
| Nicotine Pouches | 1.4% | 0.8% | 2.1% |
| Heated tobacco products | 1.1% | 1.0% | 1.3% |
| Pipe tobacco | 0.7% | 0.5% | 0.9% |

| Current Tobacco Product Use Among Middle School Students in 2022 | | | |
|--|---------|-------|------|
| Tobacco Product | Overall | Girls | Boys |
| Any tobacco product* | 4.5% | 5.3% | 3.8% |
| Electronic cigarettes | 3.3% | 4.1% | 2.5% |
| Cigarettes | 1.0% | 1.1% | 0.8% |
| Cigars | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.6% |
| Smokeless tobacco | 0.7% | 0.6% | 0.7% |
| Hookah | 0.5% | 0.6% | 0.4% |
| Nicotine Pouches | 0.5% | — | 0.4% |
| Heated tobacco products | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.6% |
| Pipe tobacco | 0.3% | — | 0.3% |

Source: CDC.gov

Addressing Student Use of Tobacco and Nicotine Products

Given the current epidemic of nicotine use among youth and young adults, a comprehensive tobacco/nicotine policy is a great first step to addressing the issue. The policy checklist below will assist in assessing the strength and opportunities for improvement of current policies.

Assess current tobacco/nicotine policy

Find out what is on the current policy is around tobacco/nicotine use and use this list of questions to provide suggested updates.

| <i>The following questions will assess the current policy for compliance of current PA laws for tobacco/nicotine-free schools.</i> | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Does the current policy: | Yes | No | Notes for edits/additions |
| 1. Prohibit the use of all tobacco/nicotine products on all school property, including grounds, buildings, parking areas and school vehicles, and at any school-sponsored event (on or off-campus) | | | |
| 2. Define tobacco to mean all forms of tobacco and tobacco use, including electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) | | | |
| 3. State that tobacco use and possession by a person under age 21 or by students is against the law | | | |
| 4. Apply to all students, staff and visitors and apply to all federally funded pre-K– 12 schools, including nursery schools, childcare centers and Head Start programs | | | |
| 5. Require the posting of signs informing students, staff and visitors of the law and consequences of violations | | | |
| 6. Include consequences for violating school tobacco policy that are non-punitive as well as progressively punitive elements (such as an education program versus suspension) | | | |
| 7. Include provisions for students to have access to programs to help them quit using tobacco products or alternatives | | | |

Implement and Promote

Update and Pass Policy

The following model policy can be used to guide updates to the school tobacco/nicotine policy.

Model Policy

[Public Health Law Center](#)

[COMMERCIAL TOBACCO-FREE K-12 SCHOOL MODEL POLICY](#)

Once the policy is drafted, the steps to pass the policy need to be followed according to the school district procedures which typically include presenting to the school board for approval.

Implement and Promote Policy

After the updated policy is approved, communication and promotion efforts need to be taken to ensure staff, students, caregivers, visitors and school partners know the updates and implementation plan.

Suggested Steps:

- ◇ Send letters home to parents/caregivers or present at back to school night or report card conferences; utilize phone call or text message system to reach households
- ◇ Share with staff at meetings or professional development trainings
- ◇ Make announcements to students at school or school sponsored events (like athletic events); add to school website; add updated policy to school handbook



Educate and Empower

Enforcement

Enforcement strategies:

- ◇ Post signs at all entrances to school buildings
- ◇ Implement age-appropriate disciplinary actions for students
 - First offense: confiscate products, notify parent/caregiver and have student participate in education/prevention program
 - Consequent offenses should include enrollment in education sessions (like INDEPTH) or cessation services (like N.O.T.) as an alternative to punitive measures

Educate and Empower Students to Quit

The following recommended programs are national, evidence-based programs that range from introductory prevention education to treatment of nicotine addiction.

Catch My Breath, prevention curriculum

[CATCH](#) consist of four lessons (30-45 min each) on vaping prevention with supplemental lessons/activities available. It is appropriate for grades 5-12 and the program is led by trained facilitator. The training program is free to schools.

Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health (INDEPTH), alternative to suspension

[INDEPTH](#) is an alternative to suspension or citation program that helps schools and communities address the teen vaping problem in a more supportive way. Instead of solely focusing on punitive measures, INDEPTH is an interactive program that teaches students about nicotine dependence, establishing healthy alternatives and how to kick the unhealthy addiction that got them in trouble in the first place. The program is held in person (or virtually if needed), led by a trained facilitator, over 4 sessions that last 45-60 minutes each. (note: facilitators may be available to lead a program at your school free of charge).



Quit Tobacco

Trusted resources for quitting:

[Not on Tobacco \(N-O-T\)](#)

N-O-T is an in-person or virtual group nicotine cessation program developed by the American Lung Association. The program is 10 sessions that runs 50 minutes each. The method helps teens quit by addressing total health in order to develop and maintain positive behaviors. Teens will talk about the importance of physical activity, nutrition, enhancing their sense of self-control, and improving life skills such as stress management, decision making, coping and interpersonal skills. Additionally, they will learn to identify their reasons for smoking or vaping, healthy alternatives to tobacco use and finding people who will support them in their efforts to quit.

[This Is Quitting](#)

Text-based youth vaping cessation program by Truth Initiative. Text “DITCHVAPE” to 88709 to enroll.

[My Life My Quit](#)

Youth nicotine cessation program by the PA Free Quitline. Services available via phone, online chat, and text. Visit website or text “Start My Quit” to 36072 to enroll.

Youth Advocacy Training Programs

[Advocacy Institute’s \(Ai\) Real Talk Tobacco](#)

The Advocacy Institute (Ai) is a youth empowerment and training program that works as an engine for both individual and community empowerment. Youth are empowered to identify tobacco control issues in their community in need of change and explore a variety of public health advocacy skills, such as policy, media advocacy, and community mapping to address them. Participants complete an “action project,” which utilizes their new-found confidence and knowledge, and the support of the Ai community, to advocate for change in their community. Upon completion of the program, youth become members of the Advocacy Institute Alumni Network which provides ongoing training, professional development, and support to continue their youth-led advocacy work.

Tobacco-Free Communities

Community Support

There are many ways to support a tobacco-free environment including reporting tobacco sales to individuals under 21 years of age in your neighborhood.

Anonymously report illegal tobacco sales here: sepatobaccofree.org/report-a-violation/

In response to the Clean Indoor Air Act of 2008, there are policies in place to reduce second-hand exposure to tobacco smoke and nicotine aerosols in public spaces (schools, restaurants, workplaces, playgrounds).

More information can be found here: tobaccofreekids.org

There are programs and resources that educate parents on the dangers of vaping, what to look for and how to access resources for their children.

Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes (PAVe)

PAVe is a national advocacy and education organization on a mission to educate parents of the predatory practices Big Tobacco and fight back to protect kids. Parent volunteers work in partnership with tobacco control partners for legislative and regulatory action to curb youth nicotine addiction through vaping. PAVe carries out adult education through webinars, local/state-level tailored events for parents and families in collaboration with schools and community partners, as well as digital media materials. They offer parent-to-parent support and have built a community for those struggling with youth who vape.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids offers videos, fact sheets and tips for parents/caregivers on e-cigarettes and how to talk to youth.

Tobacco Education Resource Library (U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services)

The Tobacco Education Resource Library, run by the FDA Center for Tobacco Products, provides free print materials and web content aimed at communicating the dangers of tobacco use.

Know the Risks: from the Surgeon General

The office of the Surgeon General provides a guide on “How to Talk to Your Teen about E-Cigarettes”. The tip sheet includes how to prepare for the conversation, what to say, suggested answers and how to keep it an ongoing conversation.

For more information, visit:
WWW.SEPATOBACCOFREE.ORG
tobaccocontrol@phmc.org



SOUTHEASTERN PA
**Tobacco
Control
Project**



**HEALTH
PROMOTION
COUNCIL**
a PHMC affiliate