

E-Cigarette/Vaping Prevention: Tools for Schools toolkit



**scan the QR code here
for more information**



The latest SC Youth Tobacco Survey shows that while youth smoking has decreased, the use of e-cigarettes/vapes has dramatically increased. Data shows that about

“one in five high school students in South Carolina currently use e-cigarettes.”

E-cigarettes contain nicotine, a chemical that is highly addictive. Using e-cigarettes or vaping devices increases the risk for nicotine addiction, worsens chronic health conditions, and can lead to increased absenteeism and lower academic performance.

This toolkit is for South Carolina school personnel, including administrators, educators, teachers, and health services staff working to address the use of e-cigarettes/vaping devices in schools. It outlines opportunities for action and provides resources for download via the included QR code.

Vaping 101

- E-cigarettes are often referred to as vapes.
- Most e-cigarettes and vapes contain nicotine, the addictive drug in regular cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products.
- E-cigarettes/vapes produce a toxic aerosol by heating e-liquid, which is then inhaled and exhaled.
- Vaping nicotine puts youth at risk for tobacco-related diseases, a lifetime of nicotine addiction, and premature death.
- E-cigarettes are very easy to conceal.
- E-cigarettes/vapes come in many different shapes and sizes and can look like everyday items such as flash drives and pens.
- Disposable e-cigarette/vape devices come in a variety of fruit, dessert, and candy flavors. If you smell fruit or candy, it could be coming from an e-cigarette/vape.



Impact of Nicotine on Youth

Nearly all e-cigarettes/vapes contain nicotine. There is evidence that youth may be more sensitive to nicotine and that teens can feel dependent on nicotine sooner than adults. In young people, 5 mg of nicotine is enough to cause nicotine addiction – about the amount of nicotine in one-quarter of an e-cigarette pod. Because the brain is still developing until about age 25, youth exposure to nicotine can lead to addiction and disrupt attention and learning. Vaping nicotine also impacts mental health. Recent studies show that vaping nicotine causes anxiety and mood disorders. It also makes conditions like ADD/ADHD worse. No amount of nicotine is safe for youth.

Tobacco-Free = Vape Free: What Schools Can Do

Environments free from commercial tobacco smoke and vaping aerosol prevent youth tobacco use and protect students, faculty, and visitors from secondhand smoke. South Carolina state law currently requires all public school districts to have a written tobacco-free policy that includes e-cigarettes/vapes. Follow the steps outlined in this toolkit to develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive tobacco-free policy that includes e-cigarettes and vapes. All resources for school-based prevention covered in this toolkit are available on the [DHEC Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control Tobacco-Free Schools webpage](#). Scan the QR code to access information and details.

1. Review the district tobacco-free policy on a regular basis. This will ensure that your school is able to meet the changing needs of staff and students. It also provides an opportunity to identify gaps or weak spots in the policy that need to be strengthened.
2. Add in-class education about e-cigarettes/vapes through health-focused lesson plans and activities that can increase student knowledge of why e-cigarettes and other commercial tobacco products are dangerous for their minds and bodies.
3. Clearly communicate the tobacco-free policy to students, school personnel, parents, and the public. Offer education and training opportunities to ensure that school personnel, parents, and the public understand why the policy is important and how to comply.
4. Promote free quit support to youth and adults.



1. Review and Strengthen Current Policy

This task is best performed by a dedicated team that will be responsible for addressing commercial tobacco product use and possession on school grounds, providing opportunities for public involvement, and identifying referral pathways for cessation services. Be sure to establish the team's purpose, team roles, and expectations. Answer the following questions:

- What resources and training are needed?
- What programs and services are needed?
- How will the team assess the policy?
- What needs to be communicated to the school community and how?

Periodic review of the tobacco-free school policy can help your team address the changing needs of staff and the student body. Upon review, you may find opportunities to strengthen and improve the existing tobacco-free policy.

Improvements could include:

Adopting 100% Comprehensive Tobacco-Free Model Policy

In addition to covering all state requirements, 100% Comprehensive Tobacco-Free Model Policy prohibits [tobacco industry marketing and sponsorship at schools](#), as well as [commercial tobacco prevention education efforts from the tobacco industry](#). The tobacco industry, including e-cigarette manufacturers, engages schools and offers free commercial tobacco prevention curricula. Research shows that [industry-sponsored school-based programs are ineffective](#) and may ultimately promote commercial tobacco use among youth. Because the presence of the tobacco industry in school settings may increase the likelihood of youth tobacco use, school-based prevention efforts should remain independent of tobacco industry influence.

Adding Alternatives to Suspension: Supportive Discipline

For students found in violation of the rules of the school district tobacco-free policy, it is important that consequences don't sideline their future. School years are critical for the physical, social, and educational development needed for success both in school and in life. When updating school policies, your team should consider factors that impact youth commercial tobacco use, including the science of addiction. The tobacco industry spent decades intentionally and strategically marketing its products to youth. Youth tobacco use over the years has increased with this increased marketing. Regarding addiction, nicotine addiction essentially operates in the brain similarly to other addictions. Because of this reality, nicotine addiction should be treated in a similar way – by moving away from punitive measures and moving towards therapeutic interventions that address underlying causes and helping to treat it.

Research shows that punitive measures like suspension and expulsion may be counterproductive. Students who are suspended are at increased risk for long-term physical and mental health issues, including increased likelihood of drug use. High school suspensions are also associated with lower scores on standardized tests and overall academic achievement of the entire student body.

[Alternatives to suspension for policy violation](#) can be written in the district's tobacco-free policy. A list of evidence-based alternatives to suspension is available on the [DHEC Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control Tobacco-Free Schools webpage](#). Scan the QR code in this toolkit to access information and details.

Examples include:

- [INDEPTH: An Alternative to Teen Nicotine Suspension](#) or Citation (American Lung Association)
- [My Healthy Future](#) – a self-paced lesson, a group 2- or 4-hour teacher or counselor-led curriculum, quitting resources, and more (Stanford University)



2. Incorporate Tobacco Prevention and Education in the Classroom

Provide evidence-based tobacco prevention and education to increase students' knowledge about the risks of e-cigarettes/vapes and other commercial tobacco products. While most commercial tobacco use begins in high school, it is never too early or late to educate youth. A variety of education resources exist to reach all students in K-12. Resources for school-based prevention are available on the [DHEC Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control Tobacco-Free Schools webpage](#). Scan the QR code in this toolkit to access information and details.

Examples include:

- [Vaping: Know the Truth](#) (Truth Initiative)
- [CATCH My Breath](#) (middle school only)
- [ASPIRE](#)
- [Smokescreen](#) (play2PREVENT lab -Yale Center for Health and Learning Games)
- [Taking Down Tobacco](#) (Campaign For Tobacco Free Kids)
- [How Nicotine Affects the Teen Brain](#) lesson plan (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- [Tobacco Prevention Toolkit](#) – includes You and Me, Vape-Free curriculum (Stanford University)
- [HECAT: Tobacco Use Prevention Curriculum](#)
- [N-O-T](#) (American Lung Association)

3. Communicate Current Policy

Engage students, parents, school personnel, and the public to ensure they have the information they need to comply with the current policy and to support commercial tobacco prevention work at your school. Communication materials are available on the [DHEC Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control Tobacco-Free Schools webpage](#). Scan the QR code for access.

Follow these tips to communicate your policy:

Students

- Post e-cigarette and other tobacco product health messaging throughout the school.
- Talk to students about the harms of e-cigarettes, nicotine, and free resources to quit.
- Make in-school announcements.
- Involve student groups or clubs in developing and delivering announcements about the school's commercial tobacco-free policy.
- Update the student handbook or codes of conduct to reflect the full policy and its definitions, as well as the consequences for policy violations. These tools should also include information about how students and their families can seek free help to quit nicotine.
- Ask students participating in sports or academic groups and clubs to sign a pledge to be drug- and commercial tobacco-free.
- Ask student groups, clubs and classes to help design posters, banners and signs to hang in the hallways, bathrooms and locker rooms to promote the policy.

School Personnel

- Provide information about work-related tobacco issues, impact on health, and cessation options to all district employees.
- Invite guest speakers to staff meetings and training sessions.
- Link to cessation services on district website/intranet.
- Post flyers and signs in staff break areas.
- Educate employees on cessation benefits available through their health plan.
- Issue an official staff memo or email.
- Hold an annual presentation or training.

Parents

- Make efforts to ensure resources and communications are available in languages other than English.
- Practice cultural sensitivity when communicating with parents. Consider providing cultural competence training to school personnel to inform their communications with families.
- Avoid shaming and instead provide support and resources.
- Host parent information sessions.
- Include information in newsletters or emails.
- Send an advisory letter to parents.
- Share resources to help parents talk to their kids.

Public and Other Audiences

- Partner with a local newspaper.
- Post signs informing people about the district policy.
- Include information about your district policy on all digital and social media.
- Make announcements at events.



4. Promote Free Quit Support to Youth and Adults

Sharing information about free quit support and cessation services to all audiences impacted by school district tobacco-free policy helps people make positive changes for their health. South Carolina tobacco use surveys show that the majority of adults and teens who use commercial tobacco products want to quit.

A variety of free cessation resources are available to youth (13-17 yrs) and adults (18 yrs and older). Referring students to quit support that meets their physical, mental, and emotional health needs is often more effective than simply disciplining them for breaking the rules at school. Free cessation resources are available on the [DHEC Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control Tobacco-Free Schools webpage](#). Scan the QR code in this toolkit to access information and details.

Examples of free quit support services for youth and adults include:

Quit the Hit:

- Instagram based support group for teens who want to quit vaping
- 30 days of support
- Peer support with active moderation
- www.Quitthehitnow.com

SC Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW)

- [En español](#), 1-855-DÉJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569)
- Ages 13 and up
- One-on-one counseling for all tobacco products
- Multiple languages available, plus TTY
- Phone based coaching, plus text and web-based support
- www.quitnowsc.org or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Live Vape Free

- Text based quit support for teens
- Expert support with focus on vaping
- Programs that empower constructive conversations about the growing risks associated with vaping
- More information at www.rallyhealth.com/live-vape-free or text "VAPEFREE" to 873373

SC American Indian Commercial Tobacco Cessation Program (SC Tobacco Quitline)

- Ages 13 and up
- One-on-one counseling for all tobacco products
- Phone based coaching, plus text and web-based support
- www.quitnowsc.org or call 1-888-7AI-QUIT

QuitSTART

- Smartphone app for ages 13 and up
- Personalized quit support and tips
- Support to manage cravings and withdrawal
- Encouragement after relapse
- Download from Google Play or Apple Store

Smokefree.gov

- Web and text based support for all tobacco products
- Services for teens, adults, women, LGBTQ+, Spanish speakers, veterans, and older adults
- Program length is 6-8 weeks with 3-5 texts per day
- www.smokefree.gov

DipfreeTXT

- Text based support for ages 13 and up
- Focus on smokeless tobacco products
- Program length is 6-8 weeks with 3-5 texts per day
- More information at www.smokefree.gov

This Is Quitting (Truth Initiative)

- Ages 13-24
- Text based support
- Focus on vaping
- Program length is 4+ weeks with one message per day
- Text "DITCHVAPE" to 88709

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