



School E-Cigarette Toolkit: Addressing Student Use of E-Cigarettes

Overall youth tobacco use has increased dramatically in California over the past few years. The rapid uptake of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and other vaping devices in recent years suddenly reversed a trend of declining teen tobacco use in California.

The resources provided below are intended to assist California school staff, including administrators, educators and health services providers who are working to address the use of e-cigarettes and other vaping products in schools.

E-Cigarettes and other Vaping Products

- ✓ E-cigarettes create an aerosol by using a battery to heat up liquid (e-juice) which, in addition to nicotine, contain a high concentration of additives.
- ✓ Users inhale this aerosol into their lungs.
- ✓ The aerosol does not have the traditional smell of a regular cigarette. E-cigarettes come in a variety of flavors (such as bubble gum, grape, and cool mint) that are appealing to youth.
- ✓ The most popular e-cigarettes in California are shaped like USB flash drives. These are almost unnoticeable to others because of their small size, shape, and often pleasant smell.
- ✓ Nearly all e-cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm the developing adolescent brain.

Learn more about e-cigarettes and nicotine:

- ✓ [CDC Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults](#)
- ✓ [Know the Risks: E-cigarettes and Young People](#)
- ✓ [CDC Presentation for Youth](#)

For School Administrators

Tobacco-Free School Policies

In California, all public K-12 local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to prohibit the use of all tobacco products by students, staff, and visitors at all times on all LEA property. The LEAs are required to post signs stating "Tobacco Use is Prohibited" at all entrances to LEA property.

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Tobacco-free schools are a proven way to prevent youth tobacco use and protect students, staff, and visitors from secondhand smoke. A comprehensive tobacco-free school policy does more than deter individual tobacco use. It benefits everyone by reducing exposure to secondhand smoke and creating a framework and system that reinforces tobacco-free norms and attitudes. These in turn affect the current and future use of tobacco, thereby protecting the health of the entire community.

Strengthen and Review Current Tobacco-Free School Policy

The California Department of Education's (CDE's) [Comprehensive Tobacco-Free School Policy Toolkit](#) provides resources to assist educational agencies to adopt and implement tobacco-free school policies.

The American Lung Association has developed resources to [Create Tobacco-Free Schools](#). This resource provides help to parents on how to help their schools to go tobacco free.

Consider Alternatives to Suspension

While students who use or are in possession of tobacco/nicotine products or delivery devices are subject to discipline, LEAs are encouraged to consider their options. Suspensions cost students in lost learning time. Catching a student using or in possession of tobacco products could serve as a teachable moment to educate her or him about the dangers of tobacco and its addictive nature. Opportunities for intervention and cessation offerings should be considered.



Suspension rarely helps a student's nicotine addiction. Ideally, suspension would be used only when a student has had several prior violations or refused to participate in other outlined measures. To provide uniformity and fairness in the decision-making process, school districts should clearly outline conditions that will lead to suspension.

Students and parents should be made aware of the steps of enforcement so they understand the seriousness of using tobacco products at school. The Public Health Law Center's document [Alternative Measures to Address Tobacco use in Schools](#) provides information and guidance on alternatives to suspension.

Health Advisory

Issue a health advisory to parents that includes resources to assist them in addressing e-cigarettes with their children in a productive way.

- ✓ [CDC: E-cigarettes Shaped Like USB Flash Drives](#)
- ✓ [Talk with your Teen about E-cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents](#)

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Promote Health Messaging Throughout School

- ✓ Promote [“The Real Cost of Vaping” campaign materials at school.](#)
- ✓ Refer to the CDE’s [Tobacco-Free Policy Toolkit](#) for ways to engage students, staff, and community.

For Teachers and School Health Services Staff

Educate Students

Teach students about the harms of nicotine and e-cigarette use by using evidence-informed curricula for middle and high school students.

Evidence-Based Curricula

- ✓ [Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit](#)
- ✓ [CATCH My Breath](#)

Provide Resources to Parents about Talking to Their Teens

- ✓ [Vaping: What You Need to Know and How to Talk With Your Kids](#)
- ✓ [Know the Risks of Youth E-cigarette Use](#)

Share Quitting Resources with Youth

- ✓ [California Smokers’ Helpline](#)
- ✓ [BecomeAnEx](#) from the Truth Initiative
- ✓ [SmokeFreeTeen](#) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



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tupe@cde.ca.gov