

SCHOOLS

EACH DAY,
2,000 PEOPLE
UNDER 18 TRY
THEIR FIRST
CIGARETTE²⁰

95%
OF CURRENT SMOKERS
STARTED BEFORE
THE AGE OF 21²¹





▶ Assess your school district's current policy to ensure it covers all products and provides a supportive approach when students are caught vaping or using other tobacco products.²²

▶ Enlist support from students, staff, and the community if changes are needed

▶ Draft your policy using the model tobacco-free policy as a guide

▶ Prepare and present your policy to the school board

▶ Communicate the policy to students, staff, and visitors

▶ Enforce the policy

▶ Evaluate your policy

BACKGROUND

Having a first cigarette by age 18 makes it twice as likely one will become a lifelong smoker.²³

Our brains do not fully develop until the age of 25, specifically the section that regulates decision making and impulse control. Nicotine exposure during brain development affects the way synapses are formed and can create elevated risk of addiction, mood disorders, and permanent diminished impulse control.²⁴

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They [adolescents' brains] ramp up and down their receptors much faster, more thoroughly, and more permanently.²⁵

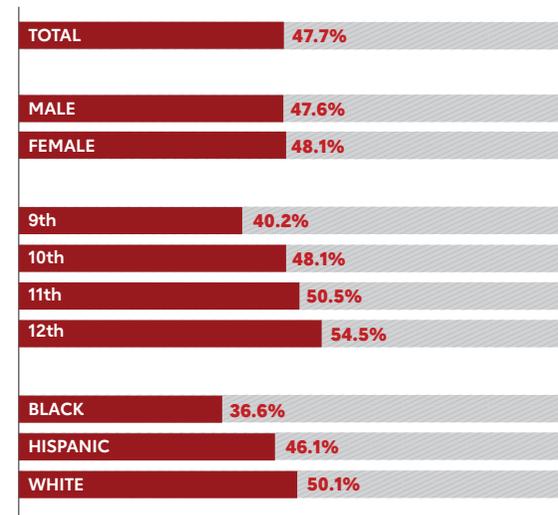
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In recent years, the use of electronic cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and vaping products have increased dramatically among youth and young adults, many of who didn't realize the products contained nicotine. An April 2018 Truth Initiative® study found that **63%** of JUUL users between **15** and **24** years old **did not know that the product always contains nicotine.**²⁶

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey asks students to self-report certain behaviors each year to assess trends and potential health risks, from 2015 to 2019 Kentucky schools saw an increase in the percentage of students who have ever used an electronic vapor product from **41.7** in 2015 to **53.7** in 2019.²⁸ As the graph shows, Ohio 12th graders reported a higher percentage of ever using an electronic vapor product at **54.5%** over all other grades.

Although self-reporting was similar amongst male and female identifying students, white students reported higher use of electronic vapor products as compared to Hispanic and Black students.²⁹

Percentage of High School Students Who Ever Used an Electronic Vapor Product 2019:



Many e-cigarette products deliver more nicotine than a pack of cigarettes.²⁷



MODEL TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOL POLICY

School district approaches to tobacco are typically codified through district-wide policies, student codes of conduct, administrative rules and state regulations or laws. This document contains comprehensive language to support districts in creating and sustaining 100% tobacco-free school environments.

While each school district is unique in its approach to setting policies and practices regarding tobacco, the model language outlines **an exemplary approach for tobacco-free school policy that includes, but is not limited to, the following:**

- ▶ The policy applies to ALL tobacco products;
- ▶ The policy prohibits use of ALL tobacco products by students, staff and ALL visitors while on school property and at ALL schoolsponsored events;
- ▶ The policy prohibits tobacco industry promotional activities, including industry-supported prevention and cessation programs;
- ▶ The policy reflects a supportive approach to discipline for students;
- ▶ The policy ensures students interested in quitting will be referred to a cessation program.

The model language can help ensure districts adopt the policies, administrative rules and codes of conduct that establish an equitable and supportive approach to student tobacco use and vaping. Additionally, the model language contains recommendations to ensure effective implementation and accountability. When creating or updating tobacco policies, districts should also incorporate state and local regulations impacting the use of tobacco products in schools and on other district property.

We hope this model language is helpful as you work to revise your own policies, administrative rules and student codes of conduct.

For the full tobacco-free policy language recommendations visit [HERE](#)



CASE STUDY

During the 2018-2019 school year, Alyssa, a health educator and certified tobacco treatment specialist with the Department of Public Health, worked with a local high school to assist them in becoming a 100% tobacco-free campus. She utilized the Ohio Health Department's 7-step process for Tobacco-Free Schools: Positive Role Modeling For Our Future Generations:³⁰

1. Assess your school district's current policy
2. Enlist support
3. Draft your policy using the model tobacco-free policy as a guide
4. Prepare and Present Your Policy to the School Board
5. Communicating the policy to students, staff and visitors
6. Enforcing the policy
7. Evaluate your policy

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Always keep it about the youth and how it affects them. Focus on the money it will cost them. Make the business case: how much is the cost of the product, addiction, cost of absences, cost of their long long-term health.
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Alyssa began her work by reaching out to key stakeholders. She connected first with the health teacher who was a quick and natural champion. The health teacher was able to introduce Alyssa to the appropriate people at the school who could influence and change policies. Developing a case for support is critical to influence policy change. Alyssa recommends creating an email and powerpoint that highlight an overview of the policy, relevant statistics, list of supporters (including students, staff, PTA, school board), and financial benefits.

Alyssa found quick champions in the school nurse as well as the PTA. This provided the support necessary to win over the Superintendent and the Executive Business Director. This process took roughly a year and a half for the policy to be introduced, reviewed, approved, and implemented. "My advice: Be prepared for backlash, and be knowledgeable about the topic! Don't back down just because someone says this is how it's always been."

A part of the policy includes an educational component on tobacco for students and staff. The curriculum focuses on educating, empowering, and engaging youth in the fight against tobacco and e-cigarettes. CATCH my breath is an evidence based nicotine vaping prevention program with resources for schools and includes videos, training materials, and curriculum. "I would say roughly **75%** percent of every class I taught had tried vape pens, and **85-95%** of students had tried it in some school districts." Alyssa said.

It is important to engage the students and grab their attention with relatable examples: "I often used the example of a student who was studying for exams and by the end of it he would've gone through 3 pods of a vape pen which is 3-6 packs of cigarettes. I would mention this and all the kids would gasp! Oh that's disgusting!"

It's imperative to ensure that this policy isn't punitive towards students, but rather is an opportunity to provide students with support and education.





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A smoke
free school
can lead to
a healthier
you!

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Recommendations for Implementation

For assistance with education, curriculum materials, and implementation resources to establish your tobacco free school policy we recommend utilizing the following resources:

Education:

- ▶ Hamilton County Public Health Department: <https://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org/contact-us/>
- ▶ American Heart Association: https://www.yourethecure.org/e_cigarette_resources
- ▶ Tobacco 21: <https://tobacco21.org>
- ▶ City of Cincinnati Health Department: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIIgcsoiu6I&feature=youtu.be>

Curriculum Materials:

- ▶ Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit: <https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit.html>
- ▶ Ohio Department of Health Tobacco-Free Schools Toolkit: <https://rb.gy/xwwhqg>
- ▶ Prevention First: <https://www.prevention-first.org/home/>

Implementation:

- ▶ Hamilton County Public Health Department, Health Promotion Education Division: <https://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org/contact-us/>
- ▶ Ohio Department of Health cessation program resources: <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/tobacco-use-prevention-and-cessation/cessation/>
- ▶ Northern Kentucky Health cessation program resources: <https://nkyhealth.org/individual-or-family/individual-health/quit-smoking/>



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