TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

to help prevent commercial tobacco and nicotine use among students



Association for Nonsmokers-MN

August 2026 -

School Partners,

The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota (ANSR) is dedicated to reducing the human and economic costs of commercial tobacco, nicotine and other drug use in Minnesota. Our core commitments are: to protect young Minnesotans from a lifetime of addiction; to ensure that all Minnesotans can breathe clean, smoke-free air everywhere; and to reduce health inequities and other disparities in relation to commercial tobacco, nicotine and other drugs. ANSR is here to support your school district with evidence-based strategies and programming regarding vaping and commercial tobacco use.

In this Tools for Schools Toolkit, you will find information on evidence-based strategies for schools, including youth education and advocacy, curriculum, treatment options, and support over suspension strategies. We also share information on other assistance ANSR can provide: newsletter drop-ins, model policies for schools, and commercial tobacco impact information.

We have included information on vape detectors in schools. ANSR does not consider the use of vape detectors to be evidence-based or effective in preventing the initiation of youth vaping or helping youth who are addicted quit.

We are more than happy to discuss further, feel free to reach out for more information. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

The ANSR Team

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ANSR's Statement on Commercial Tobacco

ANSR uses the term "commercial tobacco" to refer to products sold and manufactured by the tobacco industry for profit. Commercial tobacco is different from sacred, medicinal, and traditional uses of tobacco by Indigenous groups.

Learn more:
https://keepitsacred.itcmi.org/tobacco-and-tradition/traditional-v-commercial/

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vape Detectors	4
School and Community Activities	5
Newsletter Drop-Ins	6
Social Media Posts	10
School Policy Resources	14
Support Over Suspension	16
Tobacco 101 Curriculum	17
Youth Treatment Services	18
Support Programs and Toolkits	20
Helpful Resources and Factsheets	22

Vape Detectors

They are not evidence-based.



There are currently no peer-reviewed studies about the efficacy of vape detectors. One of the main issues with vape detectors is that they merely track the problem, rather than work towards prevention or treatment. They can even be counterproductive.

Some consequences of vape detectors include:

- Surveillance measures focus on punishment rather than prevention;
- Negative impact on trust and relationships between students, teachers and administrators;
- False sense of security;
- False positives and false negatives as vape detectors are not always accurate and can lead to confusion and may undermine effectiveness;
- Distracts from comprehensive approaches that address the teen vaping crisis;
- Schools may not be prepared to handle the tobacco product waste problem that may arise from vape detectors; and
- The unintended consequences of implementing such measures may create fear and anxiety among students, which impacts their learning environment.
- The use of vape detectors may also worsen racial health inequities by disproportionately targeting certain student groups, leading to exclusionary disciplinary actions like suspensions.

Learn more:

- Guide from **Public Health Law Center** on recommended uses of prevention dollars by schools
- Research from The **Journal of School Nursing** on student perceptions of vape detectors
- Report from **Drug Free Northern Michigan** on Re-evaluating Vape Detectors and Punitive Responses to Vaping in K-12 Schools
- Guidance from **Minnesota Department of Health** on avoiding the use of vape detectors

Supportive School and Community Activities

What CAN your school district do to prevent student tobacco and nicotine use? Rather than install vape detectors, these evidence-based activities can help reduce youth use and build relationships in your community.



Updating School Policy and Student Handbook
Best practice policy models and handbook language recommendations. This includes implementing Support over Suspension strategies in schools. (see page 15 for more information on Support over Suspension).



Staff and Student Trainings
In-person or virtual training with staff and students on basics and emerging trends for vapes, target marketing, and the power of youth leadership.



Starting a Youth Group
Partner with youth in the community to work on these issues together. Youth can be the most powerful messengers due to their unique perspectives and peer-to-peer skill-building.



School Board Presentations
Presentations and discussion with school board members around the issue and the case for Support over Suspension and updated school policies. In-person or virtual. Make sure to include your youth partners!



Community Presentations
Presentations and discussion with community members around commercial tobacco and vaping issues. In-person or virtual. Make sure to include your youth partners!

Newsletter Drop-ins

Whether it is in a school newsletter or for social media, ANSR can help create newsletter drop-ins and social media posts. Newsletter drop-ins and social media posts can help spread awareness about commercial tobacco-related issues and get the conversation started in your district.

Some topics could include:

- Flavored commercial tobacco products and e-liquids
- Nicotine pouches
- Vape detector ineffectiveness
- How to talk to your kids about vaping
- Vaping and mental health
- Tobacco industry targeting
- Vape waste and environmental impacts
- Youth quit resources

Example #1
"Vapes Shops are the New Candy Stores"

Remember the saying “like a kid in a candy store?” Big Tobacco took that phrase and ran with it when brainstorming ways to recruit new users. The tobacco and nicotine industry knows that kids don’t want to consume tobacco or nicotine that actually tastes like tobacco—nearly 80% of Minnesota middle and high school students responded ‘definitely not’ when asked if they would use a tobacco-flavored e-cigarette. Instead, the industry sells products in sweet and fruity flavors like Blue Razz, Gummy Worm and Cotton Candy to entice young people and get them hooked. The flavors that once belonged in candy stores are now making their way into kids’ lungs.

Candy and fruit flavors aren’t the only culprits, either. The tobacco and nicotine industry also knows that the cooling effect of menthol makes smoking easier to start and harder to quit. For years, the industry has targeted youth with menthol advertising, event sponsorships and free samples. In 1978, the makers of Newport cigarettes said “...the base of our business is the high school student.” This still holds true almost fifty years later. Tobacco products, especially e-cigarettes, come in a number of minty, fresh flavors to mask the harshness of smoking and make the products taste better. Of Minnesota students who had used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, 39% had used menthol-flavored e-cigarettes. These products undoubtedly appeal to youth by making smoking more convenient.

Flavors encourage kids to start using tobacco products and keep them coming back for more. According to the 2023 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey, 76% of Minnesota middle and high school students who experimented with tobacco reported that the first product they ever tried was flavored with menthol or another flavor. It is time to end the sale of flavored tobacco products to protect our kids from Big Tobacco’s predatory schemes and the lifetime of nicotine dependence that may follow that first (most likely) flavored use.

Example #2
"Tips for Talking to Your Child About Vaping"

Talking to teenagers is hard, especially when it comes to talking about substance use. Even so, parents are the most powerful influence in their child's life. It is important to discuss vaping with your child early and often to protect their health and set them up to make informed decisions. Here are a few ways to foster an open conversation about vaping that will leave you both feeling empowered:

Before you talk:

- Find the right time and place — Leading with "We need to talk" or sitting your child down in a formal setting may immediately come across as confrontational. Pick a moment that is calm and casual, maybe when you drive past a vape shop or are having family dinner.
- Consider where they're coming from — Think about the many influences that may affect how your child feels about vaping: their friends, advertisements they see on social media or TV, their peers at school, other adults in their life, etc. Ask yourself, when you were a teenager, how would you want your parents to bring up a tricky topic like vaping?
- Know the facts — Your child may ask you questions about vaping during your conversation or expect you to have some background on the topic. There is a lot of misinformation out there, so it is important to learn the basics from trusted sources. The CDC and the American Lung Association are great places to start.

While you talk:

- Don't lecture — Your child likely already knows that you disapprove of drug use. To avoid their defenses and increase your chances of being heard, position your talk as a conversation between you two, not a lecture from parent to child. As soon as they feel talked down to or ashamed, they may resist or shut down. Avoid phrases like "you should," "you can't," and "I disapprove."

- Lead with questions and truly listen — Instead of beginning with statistics or health information, start by asking your child a simple question about vaping. This opens the door for dialogue and shows that you truly care about their perspective. Try some of these open-ended questions to get the conversation going, and when they answer, don't tell them how they should feel or why you think they're wrong:
    - *What are your thoughts on vaping?*
    - *How do you feel about how your school handles vaping?*
    - *It seems like I see news stories about vaping everyday. Why do you think vaping has become so popular?*
- Be ready to hear that your child may vape — There is a possibility that your child has experimented with vaping. If they feel like they will be punished, they may not share this information with you. If they do, rather than getting angry or turning to discipline, thank them for being honest and explain that you are concerned because you care about them and their health.
- Blame the industry, not your child — The tobacco and nicotine industry intentionally targets children with advertising and enticing flavors. Their goal is to get them hooked for life. Remind your child that you are on the same side when it comes to the tobacco industry and that it isn't their fault for being interested in vape products.

After you talk:

- Thank them — Let your child know that you appreciate their honesty. Ending with trust will make it easier for them to come to you with other questions or when they need advice.
- Follow up — This isn't a one-and-done conversation. Things are always changing—new products hit the market, your child makes new friends, new data comes out about vaping. Keep an open line of conversation between you and your child and take the initiative to bring the topic up again if they don't.

Learn more:

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing hosts a robust **"Getting Candid" Toolkit** with a number of tailored resources to support youth-serving providers and other adults having prevention conversations with youth.

Social Media Posts

Social Media Post Example #1



Social Media Post Example #2



Social Media Post Example #3



Social Media Post Example #4



School Policy Resources

The [Minnesota Department of Health] website includes school policy resources. Below are resources highlighted on the website.



The Public Health Law Center's [Commercial Tobacco-Free K-12 School Model Policy] is a national resource for states, school districts, and schools that are creating or strengthening a commercial tobacco policy.

This model policy has an emphasis on alternatives to suspension and expulsion measures.

Additionally, the Public Health Law Center has released a [Q&A document] for schools to help update a policy.

American Lung Association®

The American Lung Association's [Vape-Free Schools Initiative] is a national resource to support schools navigating vaping prevention with tools to help both schools and students.

School Policy Resources



The American Heart Association's **Tobacco-Free Schools Toolkit** was designed to help school districts respond to the youth tobacco/ vaping epidemic. The toolkit assists schools in creating a tobacco-free environment that helps prevent students from using tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, and support students who need help quitting. It includes:

- Sample school policy language
- Sample letter to parents / caregivers
- Announcements for sporting events
- Social media messages

ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation's **Tobacco-Free District Model Policy Implementation Checklist** was designed to help school districts and school teams implement a tobacco-free policy. This checklist includes:

- Sample school policy language
- Detailed action steps
- Additional resources for support

Support Over Suspension

Support Over Suspension refers to policy and systems change that addresses commercial tobacco use by removing punitive measures and replacing them with programs that are designed to focus on offering education and treatment in the school setting instead.



Why is it Important?

- Suspensions are counterproductive;
- Research shows students who receive one or more suspensions per year are more likely to experience mental health issues, use drugs and alcohol, and exhibit antisocial behavior;
- The most effective approaches to helping youth quit tobacco use are through counseling and education;
- Once addicted, it may be incredibly difficult for youth to quit. This often explains why students with an addiction continue to use these products in school despite policies prohibiting their use and possession; and
- There is clear consensus from national health organizations that commercial tobacco policies should not include penalties like suspension.

Learn more:

Pages 16-19 of this toolkit provide information about free, evidence-based programs and resources to help schools reinforce support over suspension policies.

Tobacco 101

A Teacher's Guide to Anti-Tobacco Lesson Planning

This free, web-accessible eleven-lesson guide contains multimedia and interactive lessons for teaching young people about tobacco, the tobacco industry, and how they can use their voice to create a healthier community. These lessons include discussions, hands on activities, videos, community surveys, and the opportunity to make plans to create policy change. The guide is a fun, interactive tool to help you develop young tobacco prevention advocates.

Visit **ansrmn.org/tobacco-101** to access Tobacco 101 today!

Guide Outline

Lesson 1: Tobacco 101—Intro to Tobacco

Lesson 2: Marketing and Advertising: What You See is Not Always What You Get

Lesson 3: Child Labor in the Tobacco Industry

Lesson 4: Flavored Tobacco, Menthol and E-Cigarettes

Lesson 5: People Power vs. Tobacco Industry

Lesson 6: What is the Tobacco Industry Doing in my Neighborhood?

Lesson 7: Sharing Our Findings: Taking Action

Lesson 8: Price Discounting

Lesson 9: Electronic Cigarettes (Vapes): A Deeper Dive

Lesson 10: Environmental Impacts

Lesson 11: Mental Health and Nicotine

What is included in this guide:

- Downloadable resources
- Video and other multimedia links
- Activities for a variety of learning styles
- Hands-on student engagement
- Student-led discussion and learning
- Supplemental materials

Who this guide is for:

- Middle school teachers
- High school teachers
- Advisors of student leadership groups
- Scout leaders
- Youth group leaders
- Other adults interested in youth advocacy

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Tobacco 101 can be accessed at:
ansrmn.org/tobacco-101

The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota

Youth Treatment Services

My Life, My Quit™

Youth ages 13-17 can access free and confidential tobacco treatment services through **My Life, My Quit (MLMQ)** supported by the Minnesota Department of Health.

- MLMQ offers FREE continuing education for school staff, on tobacco treatment for youth at **CoursesThatClickMN.com**.
- MLMQ can be used as an alternative to suspension program.
- **Posters and other promotional materials** are available to promote and spread awareness about this program.

Text "Start My Quit" to 36072, visit **MyLifeMyQuit.com**, or download the new mobile app.

truth initiative
INSPIRING LIVES FREE FROM SMOKING, VAPING & NICOTINE

EX Program is a free and anonymous text messaging program from Truth Initiative designed to help young people quit vaping.

- EX Program is tailored based on age (13-24 years old) and product usage to give teens and young adults appropriate recommendations about quitting.
- **Free promotional materials** are available to promote the program within schools and local communities.



MY LIFE MY QUIT™

Three Quick Steps to Help Students Quit Nicotine

1. **Ask students** about their use of nicotine-containing products, including e-cigarettes/vapes.
2. **Advise them** that quitting nicotine will help them stay healthy and be more successful in school.
3. **Connect them** with free quit support.

70% of MN high schoolers and middle schoolers who use e-cigs report signs of nicotine dependence

How to Connect Students to Free Quit-Nicotine Support

▪**Let them know about free, confidential coaching.** My Life, My QuitTM offers this free support by phone or text.

▪**Set up a call.** You can have My Life, My Quit reach out to the student. On MyLifeMyQuit.com, go to Provider Web Referral (https:/direc.to/hYet)

- Let the student know that they will receive a call within 24 hours to help enroll them in My Life, My Quit.

▪**Have the student text.** The student can sign up at MyLifeMyQuit.com or by texting "Start" to 36072.

▪**Follow up with the student.** Offer additional support and on-going encouragement.

Did a student violate your school's commercial tobacco-free policy?

Encourage them to complete My Life, My Quit as an alternative to suspension or other penalty. When the student completes My Life, My Quit (five coaching sessions), they will receive a certificate of completion to provide to school administrators.

Learn more: Implementing My Life, My Quit™ as an Alternative to Suspension (https: /direc.to/hW8S)

Want to learn more about vaping and how to help your students quit nicotine?

Here are two ways to learn more about these important topics:

1.Get free, quick and easy continuing ed credits on CoursesThatClickMN.com

2.Check out the School Toolkit for E-cigarette Use Prevention and Cessation (https: /direc.to/hW86)



Support Programs & Toolkits

Minnesota Department of Health webpage on **Tools and Resources for Schools** includes:

- Factsheets
- School curriculums
- Sample tobacco-free policies
- Messaging for parents, youth and teachers
- Advisories for parents
- Free signage and more!

INDEPTH is a FREE 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. How it works:

- Schools connect with the American Lung Association
- Facilitators completed an online INDEPTH training
- Facilitators prepare and implement the INDEPTH program

As part of the Don't Blow It: Anti-vaping Campaign, Essentia Health developed a **Don't Blow It Teacher Toolkit and Curriculum** that can be used by teachers and community groups to educate students and the general public about the dangers of vaping. Each module includes short videos produced by student peers and activities teachers can use to facilitate classroom learning about vaping.

Support Programs & Toolkits



The **Stanford Medicine Tobacco Prevention Toolkit** includes a theory-based and evidence-informed curriculum and resources created by educators, parents, youth and researchers aimed at preventing middle and high school students' use of tobacco and nicotine. The toolkit includes:

- You and Me, Together Vape-Free Curriculum
- Our Healthy Futures Curriculum: Alternative-to-Suspension Curriculum
- Smokeless Tobacco 101
- Hookah 101
- Factsheets and posters



Escape the Vape Video Challenge is a PSA video contest where Minnesota 6th-12th graders can use their voice to raise awareness about the dangers of vaping and expose the shadowy commercial tobacco marketing tactics behind it. Students create and upload their 30-second, vape-bashing masterpiece, and have the chance to win cash prizes and swag. **#mnjointheescape**

More tips for using Escape the Vape Video Challenge are available at the **Minnesota Department of Health**.

Helpful Resources and Factsheets



The factsheets included on the following pages can be helpful to gain insight on the issue at hand: commercial tobacco use among students. They can be used in presentations and shared with decision makers, parents and others to inform and educate on the topic with the goal of supporting youth.

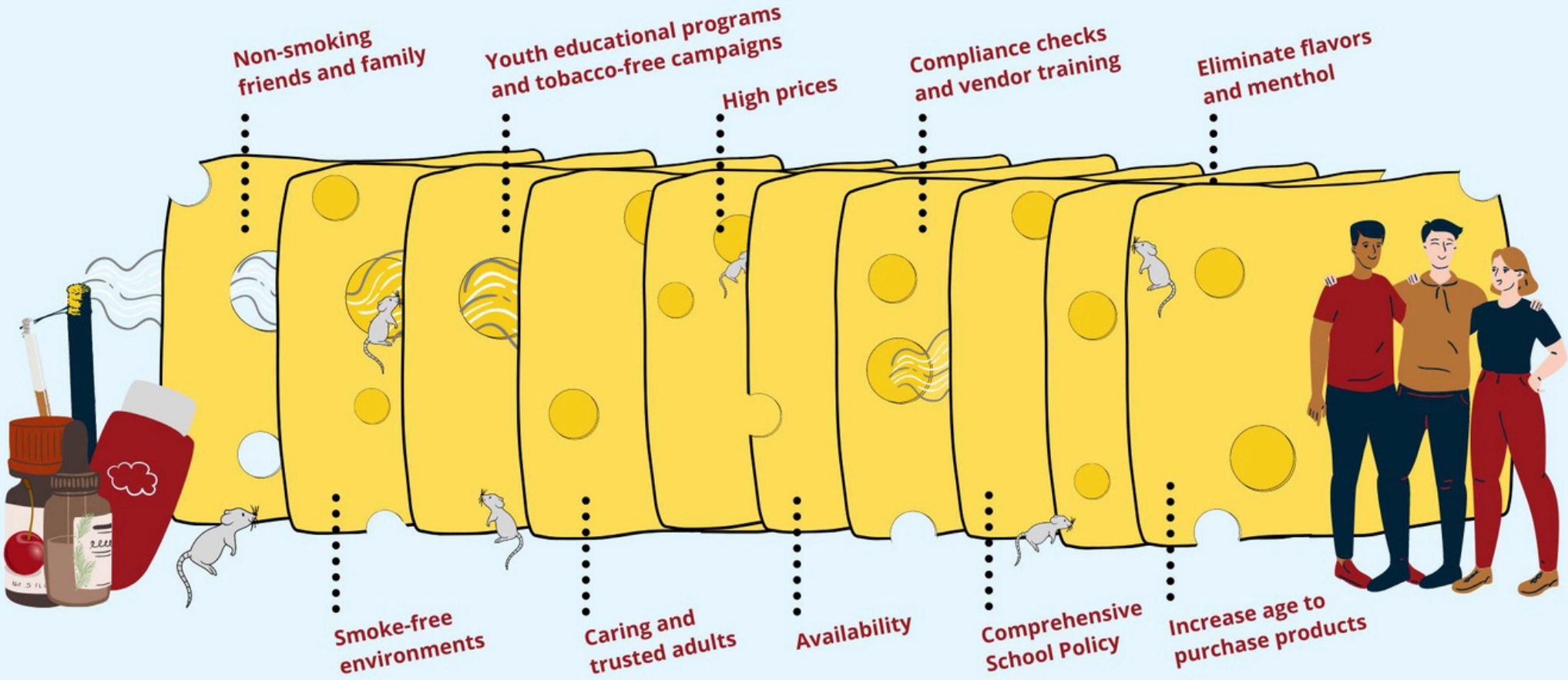
Factsheets included on the following pages:

- **Swiss Cheese Model of Commercial Tobacco Prevention**
- **Flavored Commercial Tobacco Products**
- **Oral Nicotine Pouches**
- **E-Cigs: The Vape Saga Continues**
- **Vaping and Mental Health**
- **What's in Your Backpack?**

Other helpful factsheets and resources about topics pertaining to commercial tobacco and vaping products can be found on our website! Visit us at: **www.ansrmn.org**

SWISS CHEESE MODEL OF COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PREVENTION

Effective commercial tobacco prevention happens when interventions are layered together to create a healthy tobacco-free community.



Interventions

Targeted tobacco industry marketing, social media misinformation, and tobacco lobbyists weakening regulations

Source: Adapted from James T. Reason

The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota

TOBACCO-FREE ALLIANCE

2395 University Avenue W, Ste 310, St. Paul, MN 55114
651-646-3005 www.ansrmn.org

(October 2022)

FLAVORED COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCTS*

BIG TOBACCO TARGETS KIDS WITH FLAVORED PRODUCTS

Flavored commercial tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, blunt wraps, e-cigarettes (also known as vapes) and shisha (tobacco used in hookah). These products help the tobacco industry bypass the FDA's 2009 ban of flavored cigarettes other than menthol.[1] Menthol is the only flavor allowed in cigarettes.



Photo credit: ANSR-MN

Vape packaging often has colorful designs and resembles popular imagery familiar to youth.



Photo credit: Tobacco-Free Alliance

Vapes come in thousands of flavors such as Mixed Berry Ice and Sour Rainbow Berries (shown above).

THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY USES FLAVORED PRODUCTS TO ATTRACT THE NEXT GENERATION OF SMOKERS[3]

- Young people are more likely to use flavored commercial tobacco, and most would quit if flavors were removed.[4]
- In 2023, three fourths of Minnesota students (76.3%) who had used commercial tobacco said the first product they tried was flavored.[5]
- Even more alarming, 93.3% of high school and middle school students who vaped in the last month chose flavored products.[5]

COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCTS ARE OFFERED IN THOUSANDS OF FLAVORS THAT APPEAL TO YOUTH

- There are **over 15,000** nicotine vape flavors available, many of which are designed to appeal to young users by mimicking the names and flavors of popular candies. Brands like "Cloud Nurdz," "Bazooka Sour Straws," and names like "Gummy Worm" are just a few examples of how vape products often blur the line between candy and nicotine, making them especially enticing to kids.
- Vape devices, specifically disposables, are the most popular commercial tobacco product used by youth.[2]
- Cigars, chewing tobacco, blunt wraps, vapes and shisha are sold in fruit, candy, dessert and novelty flavors.

Cheap cigars come in bright packages and a wide variety of flavors, such as grape, strawberry, blueberry, tropical fusion and chocolate/vanilla swirl.





ZYN & THE RISE IN POPULARITY OF NICOTINE POUCHES

Nicotine pouches, specifically the brand Zyn, are growing in popularity among youth in large part because they offer a discrete way to obtain a nicotine fix without alerting adults to nicotine use.[6]

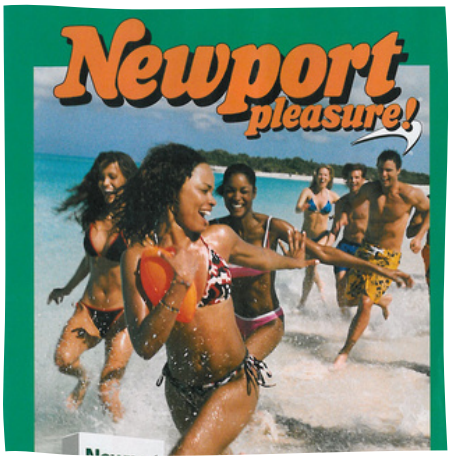
See our 'Oral Nicotine Products' factsheet for more information

MORE ABOUT MENTHOL FLAVORED COMMERCIAL TOBACCO HARMS

Menthol makes smoking and using commercial tobacco easier to start and harder to quit. The tobacco industry adds menthol flavor to make smoking easier. It gives users a cooling feeling that makes smoking seem smoother and less irritating. Menthol increases nicotine absorption, leading to greater dependence.[7]

FLAVORED COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ESPECIALLY MENTHOL, ARE A THREAT TO HEALTH EQUITY

- The tobacco industry targets certain populations with menthol - cigarette marketing using tactics like ads, giveaways, lower prices, - lifestyle branding and event sponsorships.[8] This aggressive targeted - marketing contributes to health disparities. -
- Due to tobacco industry targeting, 85% of African Americans who - smoke, smoke menthols.[9] Tobacco industry tactics contribute to - American Indians and Alaska Natives having the highest tobacco use - rates in the U.S., leading to high rates of tobacco-related deaths and - diseases.[10]
- The tobacco industry designed menthol marketing ads to target LGBTQ+ communities. This targeting exacerbates tobacco-related health disparities within LGBTQ+ communities.[11]



The tobacco industry heavily targets African Americans with menthol cigarettes by advertising in popular magazines.

The tobacco industry also attracts customers by offering price discounts as seen below.

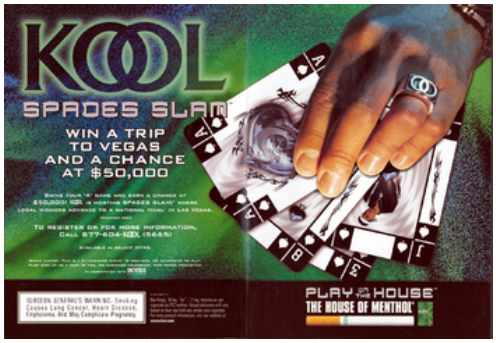


Photo credit: Trinkets and Trash

TAKE ACTION TO END THE SALE OF FLAVORED COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCTS

- States, cities, and counties can end the sales of menthol cigarettes and flavored commercial tobacco products to protect youth and targeted populations.
- Six states and over 380 cities and counties restrict flavored commercial tobacco sales. More than 190 of them ban or restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes.[12]
- Studies show that ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products reduces the chance that teens will ever try commercial tobacco.[13]
- The FDA could regulate all flavored commercial tobacco products but has been slow to act. In April 2022, the FDA proposed a ban on menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars.[14] The final ruling will likely take years and leaves out all other flavored commercial tobacco products.

Link to map of Minnesota cities and counties addressing the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products. Or at our website listed below.

*Tobacco in this document refers specifically to the use of manufactured, commercial tobacco products, and not to the sacred, medicinal and traditional use of tobacco by American Indians and other groups.

References are available at ansrmn.org/flavors

ANSR

last updated: October 2024

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TOBACCO-FREE ALLIANCE

BEAUTIFUL LIE UGLY TRUTH
ABOUT MENTHOL TOBACCO
BeautifulLieUglyTruth.org

This publication is made possible by funding from the Minnesota Department of Health's Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities Grant Program.

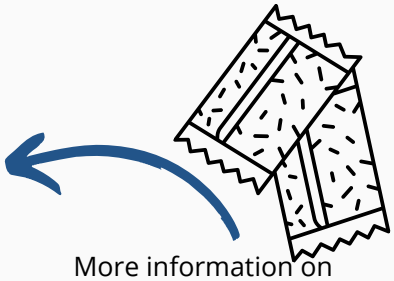
ORAL NICOTINE PRODUCTS

Oral nicotine products, including nicotine pouches, lozenges, and gums, have surged in popularity in recent years. Among these, nicotine pouches have quickly become the popular option, particularly among youth.[1] These pouches deliver nicotine discreetly, without smoke, spit or odor, making them an attractive choice for many users.

WHAT ARE NICOTINE POUCHES?

- Nicotine pouches are small, "tobacco-free" pouches that users place between their gum and lip. They release nicotine slowly and are spit-free.
- The pouches typically last for 20-60 minutes, during which nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth.[2]
- Brands like Zyn, Velo, and On! (pictured right) dominate the market. Zyn, especially, has become a go-to brand due to its variety of flavors and attractive rewards program.[3]

Oral nicotine products contain powder nicotine-filled pouches that the user places between the upper lip and gums. Unlike smokeless commerical tobacco products, they do not contain tobacco leaf but rather nicotine derived from tobacco in a lab or manufactured synthetically.[5]



More information on synthetic nicotine



Above: examples of popular oral nicotine products currently on the U.S. market.

REGULATION OF NICOTINE POUCHES.

FDA Authority: Oral nicotine products (ONPs) are not classified as smokeless commercial tobacco products due to the absence of tobacco leaf. The FDA requires manufacturers to submit information, use nicotine warning labels, and comply with some marketing restrictions.[4] However, there are no current federal regulations preventing or restricting the sale of oral nicotine pouches.

Youth Access: Despite federal and state age restrictions, the ease of purchasing can undermine these protections, allowing underage users to access these products more easily.

Health Labeling: While required to display warnings about nicotine addiction, the long-term health implications of these products remain largely unknown.

APPEAL TO YOUTH AND POTENTIAL RISKS

APPEAL TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Discreet and Convenient

The small size and lack of odor allows users to consume nicotine without drawing attention, making it easier for youth to use them undetected.

Targeted Marketing

Advertisements for oral nicotine pouches emphasize the "freedom" of using nicotine pouches anywhere. Brands such as Zyn have a rewards program where users can collect points and win prizes such as Apple Airpods, Target gift cards and Yeti coolers.[6]

Flavor and Nicotine Variety

Nicotine pouches come in appealing flavors such as wintergreen, fruit, and cinnamon. Research indicates that flavored nicotine products are more likely to be used by youth compared to adults.[7] Nicotine pouches also come in a wide range of nicotine strengths, some as high as 28 mg.

HEALTH IMPACTS

- The nicotine in nicotine pouches can cause gum disease by damaging the tissue and making it more susceptible to infection.[9]
- Nicotine pouches can raise your heart rate and blood pressure, which may increase the risk of heart problems.[10]
- Nicotine can cause dry mouth, which can lead to tooth decay, bad breath, and other dental problems.[10]
- Nicotine pouches can cause mouth sores, gum problems, and tooth sensitivity.[10]

THE RISE OF ZYN

One of the fastest-growing nicotine product categories, between 2018 and 2023, the number of Zyn cans shipped in the U.S. rose from 6 million to 334 million.[8]



Advertisements for Zyn rewards program.



Advertisements for Lucy's Subscription program.

ENDING THE SALE OF ALL FLAVORED COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCTS.*

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See our 'Flavored Commercial Tobacco Products' factsheet at ansrmn.org for more information

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This publication is made possible by funding from the Minnesota Department of Health's Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities Grant Program.

References are available at ansrmn.org

E-CIGARETTES: THE VAPE SAGA CONTINUES

Thousands of flavors, millions hooked

- In 2018, the U.S. Surgeon General declared youth e-cigarette use (vaping) an "epidemic." [1]
- As of 2023, more than 2.1 million youth in the U.S. vape.[2]
- Among teens, the most popular vape devices are single-use “disposable vapes,” which come in various flavors, shapes, and colors. These products are designed to be used until the battery is depleted and often contain significantly higher nicotine levels compared to reusable options.[2]



Photo credit: ANSR-MN

Examples of popular single use “disposable vapes” like these can contain as much nicotine as 25+ packs of cigarettes.[3]

YOUTH ARE DRAWN TO:

the big hit (or buzz) of nicotine

discreet, easy-to-hide devices

more than 15,000 flavors



Photo credit: ANSR-MN

This "strawberry blowpop" flavored vape contains 20,000 puffs of nicotine and doubles as a gaming console with built-in classics like Pac-Man, Jet Fighter, and Tetris.



Photo credit: ANSR-MN

High Light marker vape for discrete use.

SO, WHAT'S A VAPE? E-CIGARETTES AND VAPES ARE JUST DIFFERENT NAMES FOR THE SAME DANGEROUS PRODUCT!

Vapes and e-cigarettes are the same thing - battery-operated devices that heat e-juice—a mix of flavoring, liquid nicotine, and chemicals—to create an inhalable nicotine aerosol. Whether it’s a pod mod, disposable vape, or tank mod, all nicotine vapes are regulated as tobacco products, regardless of whether they contain tobacco-derived nicotine or lab-made synthetic nicotine. **Almost all flavored vapes are not legally on the market, yet they are still widely available at stores and online across the United States.**[4]

E-cigarettes are not approved as a quit smoking tool.

FDA-approved quit aids such as gum, patches and lozenges are available for adults at www.QuitPartnerMN.com.

Teens can go to www.MyLifeMyQuit.com for free quit help.

quit partner™

MY LIFE MY QUIT™



Photo credit: ANSR-MN

Mi-pod vaping promotional.

Vapes are marketed to youth.

The tobacco industry historically targets kids with flavored commercial tobacco products. It continues this practice with candy-, dessert- and fruit-flavored vapes with names like "Unicorn Poop" and "Strawberry Blowpop." With more than 15,000 available flavors, it's not surprising that over 93% of Minnesota youth who vape choose a flavored product.[5]



Photo credit: ANSR-MN

Fruit flavored disposable vape.

Signs of dependence have increased among MN youth.

- Almost 80% of current Minnesota youth who vape reported signs of dependence like reaching for their vape without thinking about it or feeling like they really need to use it.[5]
- Almost 50% of current Minnesota youth who vape are frequent users (used 20+ in past 30 days), a 47% increase from 2020 and an astonishing 165% increase from 2017.[5]

Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm brain development.

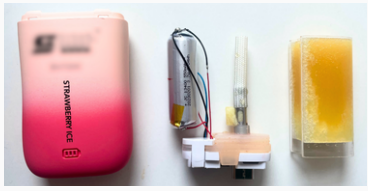


- Nicotine dependence can worsen mental health by increasing symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression.[7]
- The e-liquid flavors in vapes can cause health harms regardless of the nicotine content and can damage lungs when inhaled.[8]

VAPE WASTE IS TOXIC TO THE ENVIRONMENT

DON'T toss vapes in the trash or recycling.

DO bring used vapes to your county's hazardous waste facility.



Deconstructed vape device[9]

There is nothing disposable about these products. Vape waste is the harmful byproducts from vapes such as batteries, casings, nicotine, heavy metals and packaging. It:



Increases single-use plastics: Devices often use disposable plastics that add to the growing plastic pollution crisis.



Introduces toxic chemicals: Improperly disposed vape waste releases toxins like nicotine and heavy metals, contaminating soil and water.



Increases "e-waste:" Vape devices contain lithium-ion batteries, which are toxic, flammable, and leak harmful chemicals into the environment.

Addressing vape waste is crucial to protecting our planet from these toxic threats.

References and photo credits cited are available at www.ansrmn.org.

Created using funds from the Minnesota Department of Health's Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities grant program.

TOBACCO-FREE ALLIANCE

ANSR Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota

Last updated: October 2024

AT WHAT COST?

VAPING AND MENTAL HEALTH

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FACING TWO RELATED CRISES

The 2022 National Youth Tobacco Survey shows that about 1 in 10 middle and high school students use e-cigarettes, and more than 1 in 4 who use e-cigarettes vape daily.[1] At the same time, symptoms of anxiety and depression in young people have doubled from pre-pandemic levels.[2]

These two crises are not isolated. Though more research is needed about the connections between vaping nicotine and mental health, numerous studies expose the worrying connections between them.

THE " STRESS RELIEF " ILLUSION

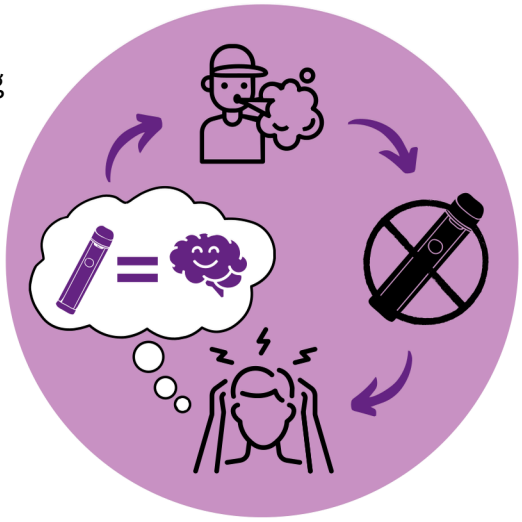
Many young people start and continue to vape because they think vaping will relieve their mental health symptoms. The most common reason youth give for continuing to use e-cigarettes after their first use is “I am feeling - anxious, stressed, or depressed.”[3] The illusion that vaping improves mental health was created by the tobacco industry and pushed through marketing, preying on those looking for relief.

81%

of young people ages 15 24 who had used e-cigarettes said they started vaping to decrease stress, anxiety or depression.[2]

THE NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL CYCLE

Part of the illusion comes down to biology. When someone hasn’t vaped in a while, it doesn't take long for symptoms of nicotine withdrawal like irritability, anxiety, depression and insomnia to begin. Vaping gives the illusion of relief from these symptoms, because consuming nicotine stops feelings of withdrawal. The cycle of symptoms followed by relief can create the false perception that vaping benefits mental health overall, even though it only curbs temporary withdrawal symptoms.[2] It is a difficult cycle to break and Big Tobacco knows it.

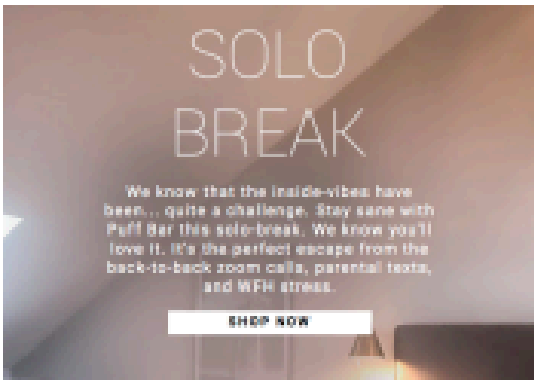


AT WHAT COST?
VAPING AND MENTAL HEALTH

BIG TOBACCO LINKS VAPING & MENTAL HEALTH

The tobacco industry's marketing campaigns try to link e-cigarette use to relaxation, pleasure and stress relief. Below are some of the ad slogans and flavors that the tobacco industry uses to convince customers of this connection:

- "Stay sane"
- "Perfect escape"
- "Relaxed and enjoyable"
- Bliss
- Soothe
- Chillax
- Zen



A Puff Bar ad connects vaping to stress relief

This marketing strategy, combined with the experience of the nicotine withdrawal cycle, seems to reinforce the connection between vaping and coping with poor mental health for those that vape. This thinking adds to the stress relief illusion. 45% of those who vape frequently agree it is OK to vape to relieve stress, while only 20% of non-vapers agree.[2]

THE REAL COST OF VAPING, POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Young people who vape frequently are **2.4X** more likely to be diagnosed with depression than their non-vaping peers.[2]

- Young people who vape report more days of poor mental health than those who don't.[2]
- Vaping nicotine can make existing mental health conditions worse.[4]
- Using e-cigarettes is associated with difficulty concentrating, remembering and making decisions.[2]

QUITTING IS THE BEST STRESS RELIEVER

Of young people who quit vaping...

90% felt less stressed, anxious and depressed[3]

47% felt more in control[3]

Quitting vaping can relieve mental health symptoms and improve quality of life. Visit www.flavorshookkidsmn.org to learn more about tobacco industry targeting and how to take action.

References available at www.ansrmn.org/issues-resources/e-cigarettes.

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(Aug 2023)

ALLIANCE

ANSR Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota

IS BIG TOBACCO IN YOUR KID'S BACKPACK?

Commercial tobacco products are designed to look like everyday items like candy and school supplies. Don't let the tobacco industry hook your kids into a lifetime of addiction.



1. Vape ■
2. Snack
3. Vape ■
4. Snack
5. Pen
6. Highlighter
7. Vape ■
8. Snack
9. Vape ■
10. Vape ■
11. Hand sanitizer
12. Vape pods ■
13. Nicotine pouches ■
14. Vape ■
15. Sharpie
16. Snack
17. Lip balm
18. Vape ■
19. Pencil
20. White-out
21. Cigarillos ■
22. Snack

■ Commercial tobacco product

MINNESOTANS FOR A SMOKE-FREE GENERATION

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