



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education 

DATE: October 10, 2019

SUBJECT: Dangers of E-cigarettes and Changes to the Connecticut Tobacco Statutes

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) recently issued a press release to inform the public about a sudden and alarming trend in the number of reported cases of severe respiratory illnesses in individuals who use tobacco alternatives, referred to as vaping or Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS). The DPH press release contains information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about the forms of e-cigarette products, an overview of the multistate outbreak of severe pulmonary disease associated with the reported use of e-cigarette products, and a list of the clinical features associated with the recent incidences of pulmonary disease ([DPH: Lung Injury Related to Vaping](#)).

According to a recent [CDC media statement](#), “Any tobacco product use, including e-cigarettes, is unsafe, especially for youth. Nicotine can harm the developing adolescent brain. We must do everything we can to reduce the use of e-cigarettes among middle and high school students to protect them from immediate lung injury and a lifetime of nicotine addiction.”

As reported in the [2017 Connecticut Youth Tobacco Survey](#), Connecticut high school students’ use of ENDS doubled between 2015 (7.2%) and 2017 (14.7%) and 45 percent of students reported exposure to secondhand smoke or ENDS aerosol. Recent information indicates that the popularity of these products continues to increase in teenage students. The 2017 survey findings also show that many students are unaware of the dangers of using such products.

It is important to note that [Public Act 19-13](#), codified in Connecticut General Statute Section 19a-342, which became effective October 1, 2019, extends the Clean Indoor Air Act to include all school property, indoors and outdoors, regardless of whether school is in session. Therefore, tobacco products, including ENDS and vaping products, cannot be used at any time on school property. The Act also increases the legal age for the purchase of all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vapor products, from 18 to 21 years old.

There are a number of actions districts can take to support tobacco use prevention efforts:

1. Share this memorandum and attached resources with all members of the school community, including administrators, health services staff, faculty and staff, students, parents and guardians, and community partners.

2. Update the district's tobacco-free policies and signs on all school property to reflect the changes promulgated by Public Act 19-13, outlined above.
3. Address tobacco-use prevention through comprehensive health education (See: Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-19: *Teaching about alcohol, nicotine or tobacco, drugs and acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Training of personnel*).
4. Engage the entire school community in a comprehensive, districtwide approach to tobacco-use prevention efforts. Consider using the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) (WSCC) model when setting up a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address vaping. The WSCC model helps to assure that all critical staff and community members have the opportunity to play a role in addressing this very dangerous problem.

If you have any questions regarding this topic, please contact Donna Heins at donna.heins@ct.gov or 860-807-2082.

MAC:crt

cc: School Medical Advisors
School Nurse Supervisors

Tobacco-Use Prevention Resources

Connecticut State Department of Education

Memorandum (January 3, 2019) to Superintendents regarding Use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2018-19/Superintendent-Memo-Student-Use-of-Tobacco-and-Tobacco-Alternatives-January-2019.pdf?la=en>

Connecticut Department of Public Health

Connecticut Department of Public Health Tobacco Control Program

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Health-Education-Management--Surveillance/Tobacco/Tobacco-Use-Prevention--Control-Program>

E-mail: DPHTobacco@ct.gov

Phone: 860-509-8251

Statistics, Reports and Fact Sheets: 2017 Youth Tobacco Survey Results

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Health-Education-Management--Surveillance/Tobacco/Stats--Reports>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- *Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with E-Cigarette Use, or Vaping*
Provides general information for use by the public, healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html
- *Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with E-cigarette Product Use or Vaping: Information for Clinicians Presentation*
Medical advisors and school nurses may find this PowerPoint presentation helpful as it provides a review of e-cigarette and vaping terminology, clinical features reported among cases of lung injury in recent outbreaks, and CDC recommendations for clinicians.
- *E-Cigarette Use Among Young People Video* ([long form](#) and [short form](#))
CDC expert Dr. Brian King giving a talk about e-cigarette use among young people for clinicians and public health professionals.
- *CDC Healthy Schools: Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child*
Provides information about the ten-component WSCC model and how its use by schools can provide a coordinated and comprehensive approach for supporting the health and academic achievement of students.
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wsc/index.htm>

Catch My Breath

Youth E-Cigarette & Juul Prevention Program

<https://catchinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CATCH-My-Breath-One-Page.pdf>