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NICOTINE FREE

Schools Toolkit

Prepared by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Tobacco Prevention June 2026



IOWA

Department of Health
and Human Services

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Introduction

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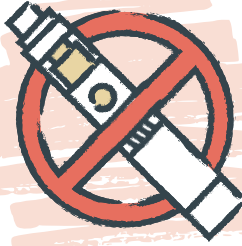


Introduction

Together, We Can Create

Healthier

Schools



Creating Tobacco and Nicotine Free Schools

This Iowa Nicotine Free Schools Toolkit is a guide to help your school or school district become tobacco and nicotine free. This toolkit contains information and resources to help your school effectively implement, clearly communicate, regularly enforce and support a truly tobacco and nicotine free campus.

This resource is brought to you by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Prevention Team. We are working to help all Iowa schools implement 100% comprehensive tobacco and nicotine free policies. This type of policy is critical to creating tobacco and nicotine free learning environments for students.

What is a Tobacco and Nicotine Free School?

A comprehensive tobacco and nicotine free school policy prohibits:

All types of tobacco products, including vapes, for all students, staff and visitors on all school grounds, in school vehicles and at school-sponsored events at all times.

In addition to adopting a comprehensive policy, schools should also make sure the policy is communicated to students, staff and visitors with clear and visible signage. Schools are encouraged to include additional prevention elements in their policies, such as establishing an Iowa Students for Tobacco Education and Prevention (ISTEP) chapter; integrating evidence-based vape and tobacco education into the school's health education curriculum and staff training; consistent enforcement and consequences in place for violations; implementing alternatives to suspension and having tobacco cessation resources available for both students and staff. More suggestions for additional elements can be found on page 13.

The tools provided will help you educate your students about the dangers of using tobacco and nicotine products, alert your school administration about the evidence-based practices for maintaining a healthy school environment, and advocate for comprehensive tobacco and nicotine free school policies.

For additional support, email us at:

> bhassistance@hhs.iowa.gov



Using This Toolkit

In This Toolkit, You'll Find:

- A checklist to evaluate your current or proposed tobacco and nicotine free school policy (p. 13)
- Sample policies and regulations (p. 15-16)
- Communications tools such as flyers, sample letters and sample announcement (p. 22-24)
- My Life My Quit cessation support for students (p. 31)
- Information about starting an ISTEP chapter in your school or community (p. 36-37)
- And more!

Where Do I Start?

Does your school have an existing tobacco policy that meets all items on the recommended checklist?



Yes? →

Great, you're good to go! Don't forget you have access to free signage and promo items including brochures, tip cards and more that we can send your way.



No? →

The "Sample Policies and Regulations" on pages 10-11 are a great place to start. Use these tools to show your administration what a comprehensive tobacco and nicotine free school policy should look like.

From there, speak with your school principal or the school board to determine their thoughts on improving the policy. If they seem uninterested, don't be discouraged! Work on spreading the word to get more students and staff on board.

Check out the "Timeline for Policy Adoption" on page 9 for help determining the best timeframe for educational campaigns and proposing your new policy. Hang posters, hold an awareness event, present to your schoolboard and make your case for the need for a comprehensive tobacco and nicotine free school policy.



Effectiveness of Comprehensive Tobacco and Nicotine Free School Policies

Tobacco and nicotine free school policies are one way to address the increasing popularity of vaping among youth. Tobacco and nicotine free schools provide decreased exposure to secondhand smoke, an opportunity for positive role modeling, and protection from youth developing an addiction to nicotine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes a comprehensive school-based program in its “Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction.” The first guideline recommends that schools develop and enforce policies to prohibit tobacco use by students, staff, parents and visitors on school grounds, in school vehicles and at all school-sponsored events, on or off school property. The other guidelines include cessation support for both students and staff, and involvement of parents or families in preventing tobacco use by youth.

Comprehensive Tobacco and Nicotine Free School Policies:

- Have been proven effective in preventing youth tobacco use
- Provide prevention education during the years when the risk of becoming addicted to tobacco and nicotine is the greatest
- Provide a tobacco and nicotine free environment that establishes non-use of tobacco as a norm and offers opportunities for positive role modeling
- Can help prevent the use of other drugs, especially if the program also addresses the use of these substances, protect school property and prevent damage from secondhand smoke and cigarette butt fires



**My school
implemented
a policy!**

**Now
what?**

Congratulations! Submit a copy of your policy and order free signs from Iowa HHS.



Information About Youth Vaping Use

The good news? There's been a decline in youth vaping, with a 2024 study showing that vaping use decreased from 2.13 million (7.7%) youth in 2023 to 1.63 million (5.9%) youth in 2024.



But that doesn't mean our work is over. By staying diligent with our communications, we can help decrease youth vaping even further.

Vaping poses avoidable health risks to young people. Vapes often contain nicotine, which can cause addiction and is harmful to the developing adolescent brain. In addition, there is substantial evidence that e-cigarette use is associated with the use of other tobacco products.¹

Vape aerosol is not harmless water vapor. It can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including nicotine, heavy metals like lead, volatile organic compounds and cancer-causing agents. The long-term health effects of e-cigarette use are unknown.²

Over 15,500 unique ejuice flavors are available online³ and research found that the majority (81.0%) of youth "ever" users of any tobacco product reported that the first product they used was flavored.⁴

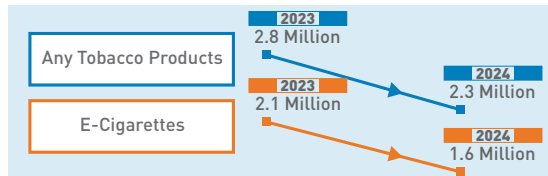


Information About Youth Vaping Use, *cont.*

NYTS
2024

Youth Tobacco Product Use Drops to Lowest Level in Past 25 Years

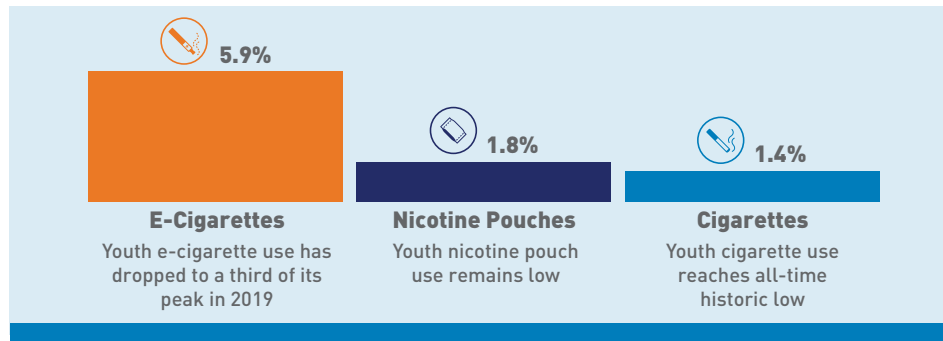
Half a Million Fewer Students Used Tobacco Products in 2024



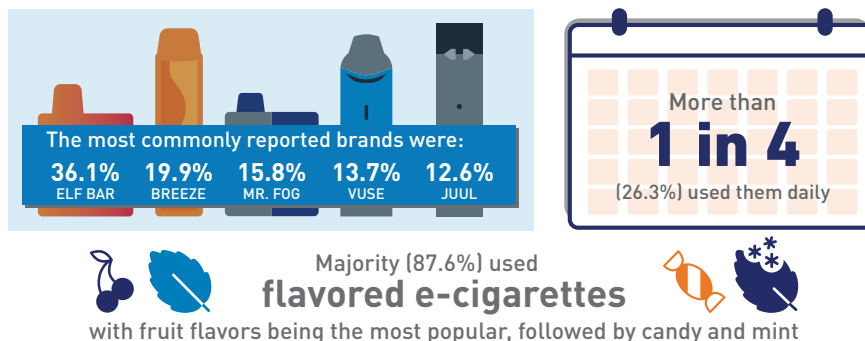
The decline in use of all tobacco products is largely attributable to the drop in students who used e-cigarettes.



Most commonly used products among middle and high school students:



Among those who reported current e-cigarette use:



Youth use of tobacco products in any form - including e-cigarettes - is unsafe. Keeping tobacco products out of the hands of youth remains a top priority for the FDA.

Note: Current use: use on ≥1 day during the last 30 days. All numbers presented here are estimates.

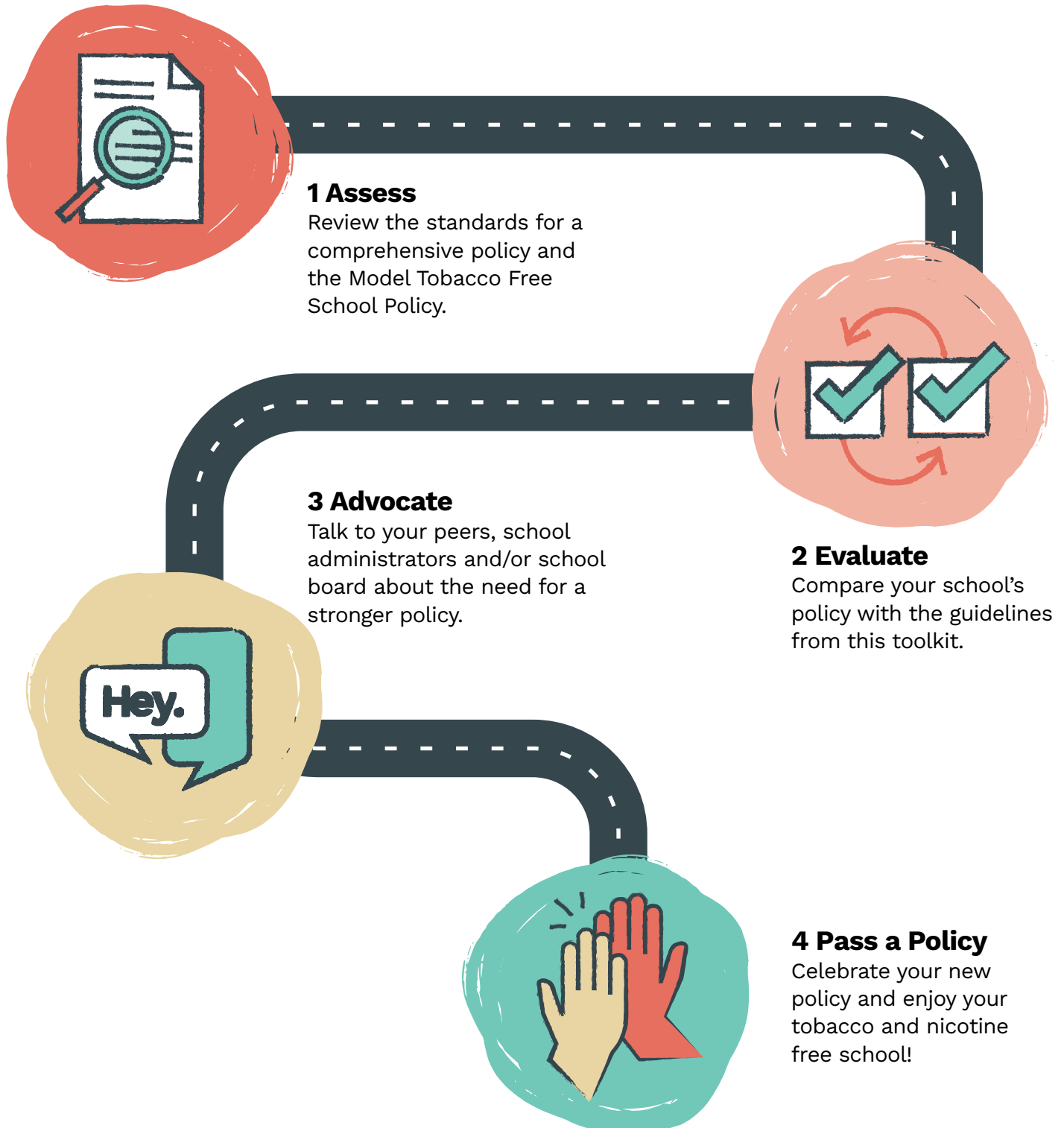
Source: Jamal A, Park-Lee E, Birdsey J, et al. Tobacco Product Use Among Middle and High School Students — National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2024. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2024;73:917–924. Park-Lee E, Jamal A, Cowan H, et al. Notes from the Field: E-Cigarette and Nicotine Pouch Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2024. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2024;73:774–778.

CENTER FOR TOBACCO PRODUCTS

CTP-280



Roadmap to Achieving Tobacco and Nicotine Free Schools





Responding to Common Questions

How are we going to get people to comply with this policy?

Communication is key. Most people will comply with the policy if they know it exists (see pages 10–11 for communication strategies and resources).

Consistently enforce the policy. When enforcement is consistent, people are much more likely to comply (see page 26 for compliance and enforcement resources).

Why include staff and visitors, and not just students?

Teachers, staff and school visitors can be powerful role models for students. Seeing adults use tobacco and nicotine products can normalize use of these products for students.

Youth who don't see the use of tobacco and nicotine products in their everyday environments are less likely to think the behavior is normal and acceptable, and they are less likely to start using these products.

Secondhand smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals, with about 70 that are known to be harmful or cause cancer.⁵ There is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure. The only way to fully protect youth from the dangers of secondhand smoke is through 100% smoke free environments.⁵

Why does the policy have to cover all school property, not just indoors?

Allowing tobacco or vape use on any school property reinforces and normalizes use of these products.

Secondhand smoke, even outdoors, can be dangerous for people (especially youth) with other health problems such as asthma and allergies.

Many tobacco and nicotine products are easy to conceal, so banning any use or possession of tobacco and nicotine products is necessary to discourage students from using them in places like buses, classrooms or bathrooms.

Why does it have to include visitors, contractors and maintenance workers, and how can we get them to comply?

Maintenance staff members are an important part of the school staff. Their support of student health and respect for school policies is essential for tobacco and nicotine free schools.

Allowing exceptions for anyone creates a mixed message.

Visitors, contractors, construction crews and maintenance workers are not subject to certain school rules and exempt from others. Enforce school tobacco and nicotine policies just as you enforce all other policies.

Responding to Common Questions, *cont.*

Why athletic events?

Tobacco use has been historically promoted by the tobacco industry through sporting events such as baseball, rodeo and football. Refraining from tobacco and vape use at school athletic events supports a healthy environment for everyone and helps de-normalize tobacco and e-cigarette use.

Why does the policy require schools to provide referrals to cessation resources?

Many tobacco cessation resources, services that help people quit smoking, are available over the phone or online. Providing the websites and phone numbers to these resources is a simple way for schools to demonstrate their commitment to the health of all students, staff and visitors. Find more information about cessation programs on pages 30-32.

Why does the policy prohibit vapes regardless of what they contain?

Vape possession and use is against school policy, regardless of whether the liquid used in the device contains nicotine.

Many vape liquids contain nicotine, which causes addiction, may harm brain development and could lead to the use of other tobacco products among youth.¹

Vape use models nicotine and tobacco use for youth, regardless of the liquid used.

Because many different liquids can be used in a vape, school staff cannot definitively determine whether a vape contains nicotine or other chemicals (such as liquid THC, a marijuana extract).

Vape aerosol is not water vapor. In addition to nicotine, vape aerosol can contain heavy metals, ultrafine particulates that can be inhaled deep into the lungs, and toxins known to cause cancer.¹



Reviewing and Strengthening Your Current Policy

- ▶ Reviewing and Strengthening Your Current Policy
- ▶ Timeline for Policy Adoption
- ▶ Sample Policies and Regulations





Reviewing and Strengthening Your Current Policy

Checklist for Model Tobacco and Nicotine Free School Policy

A comprehensive tobacco and nicotine free policy:

- ☐ Explicitly states that it covers all tobacco products, vapes, and any component or accessory used in the consumption of a tobacco product (including vape liquids, with or without nicotine).
- ☐ Prohibits the possession, use and distribution of the defined prohibited tobacco products by all students on school premises and at school-sponsored events.
- ☐ Prohibits the use and distribution of the defined prohibited tobacco products by all staff, administration, contractors and visitors on school premises and at school-sponsored events.
- ☐ Defines school premises as any building, structure, property surrounding buildings and structures, athletic grounds, parking lots, vehicles or any other outdoor property owned, leased or contracted by the school, both on and off site.
- ☐ Includes tobacco free campus signage to inform students, staff and visitors of the policy.

Schools are encouraged to include additional comments like:



- ☐ Require consistent enforcement and define consequences for violations of the policy.
- ☐ Provide resources to help students and staff overcome addiction to nicotine and use of tobacco and nicotine products.
- ☐ Provide annual notification of the tobacco and nicotine free policy in school materials, including handbooks, manuals, contracts, newsletters and websites.
- ☐ Require tobacco control and prevention education for staff.
- ☐ Establish and maintain an ISTEP chapter.
- ☐ Make announcements about the policy at school-sponsored events.
- ☐ Require tobacco education for students in the health education curriculum.
- ☐ Provide supportive discipline options (non-punitive) for positive student outcomes.
- ☐ Hold an annual awareness activity on or around a national tobacco prevention or chronic disease observance holiday (i.e., Kick Butts Day, Red Ribbon Week).
- ☐ Require all student athletes to sign a pledge to be tobacco and nicotine free.



Timeline for Policy Adoption

Implementing or changing a policy can be a long process, so don't get discouraged! Every school is different, and specific steps and timelines for adopting a new policy may look different at your school, but the approaches will remain the same. We generally recommend starting the process for educating and advocating for a new policy in the fall, with the goal of policy adoption during the spring semester.

Step 1: Educate

- Engage your local ISTEP members in this policy adoption effort, or establish an ISTEP chapter to involve youth in this youth-led leadership opportunity!
- Familiarize yourself with information about tobacco and vape products, and why they are a concern in your school. See “Information about Youth Vape Use” on pages 7-8 and “Vape and Tobacco Education for Students” on pages 18-19.
- Utilize the “Checklist for Model Tobacco and Nicotine Free School Policy” on page 8 to evaluate your school's current policy and identify how it could be more comprehensive.
- Educate your school's administrators about vaping and inform them of your initiative to strengthen the school's tobacco policy. Ask them if they could assist you with getting on the school district board agenda.

Step 2: Recommend a Change in Tobacco Policy

- Present to the school board about health concerns around nicotine, prevalence among youth and best practices for addressing tobacco use in schools.
- Emphasize that a strong school policy is the most effective way to prevent youth tobacco use and initiation!

Step 3: Draft Revisions to the Policy

- Use any feedback from your first presentation to the school board and your notes from your initial policy review to identify the changes you would like to propose.
- Utilize the “Sample Policies and Regulations” on pages 15-16 as you draft your new policy.

Step 4: Present the Policy to the School Board

- After determining the process for getting the proposed policy added to the school board agenda, plan your presentation.
- If possible, gather support from other students and community members, and meet with board members individually before the meeting.

Sample Policies and Regulations

Iowa Model School Tobacco and Nicotine Free Policy for Public & Accredited Non-Public Schools

Tobacco and Nicotine Free Environment

School district facilities and grounds, including school vehicles, are off limits for tobacco use, including tobacco-like products and the use of nicotine products that are not FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approved for tobacco cessation. (Examples include, but are not limited to, cigarettes, vapes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff, pipes, snus, etc.) This requirement extends to students, employees and visitors. This policy applies at all times, including school sponsored and non-school sponsored events. Persons failing to abide by this policy are required to extinguish their smoking material, dispose of the tobacco/nicotine product or leave the school district premises immediately. It is the responsibility of the administration to enforce this policy.



Sample Policies and Regulations, *cont.*

Based on Public Health Law Center (PHLC) Model Tobacco Free Policy for K-12 Schools

PHLC - General Statement of Policy

(A) [district/school name] students are prohibited from possessing, using, consuming, displaying, promoting or selling any tobacco products, tobacco-related devices, imitation tobacco products or lighters at any time on school property or at any off-campus, school-sponsored event.

(B) Administrators, staff or visitors of [district/school name] are prohibited from using, consuming, displaying, activating, promoting or selling any tobacco products, tobacco-related devices, imitation tobacco products or lighters at any time on school property or at any off-campus, school-sponsored events. This includes products or paraphernalia displaying tobacco industry brands.

(C) It shall be a violation of this policy for [district/school name] to solicit or accept any contributions, gifts, money, curricula or materials from the tobacco industry or from any tobacco products shop. This includes, but is not limited to, donations, monies for sponsorship, advertising, alleged educational materials, promotions, loans, scholarships or support for equipment, uniforms, and sports and/or training facilities. It shall also be a violation of this policy to participate in any type of service funded by the tobacco industry while in the scope of employment for [district/school name].

(D) It shall be a violation of this policy for any person to promote, or for [district/school name] to promote or allow promotion of tobacco products, tobacco-related devices or imitation tobacco products on the school property or at off-campus, school-sponsored events. This includes promotion of these products via gear, technology accessories, bags, clothing, any personal articles, signs, structures, vehicles, flyers or any other materials.

(E) [district/school name] shall act to enforce this policy and to take appropriate action against any student, staff, administrator or visitor who is found to have violated this policy.

(F) Instruction to discourage the use of tobacco products shall be included in the education provided for all students. Staff responsible for teaching tobacco use prevention shall have adequate training, and participate in ongoing professional development activities to effectively deliver the education program as planned. The curriculum for this instruction will not be paid for or developed by the tobacco industry or its subsidiaries.

Full policy
language and guide
can be found

HERE:



Vape and Tobacco Education

- ▶ Vape and Tobacco Education for Students
- ▶ Vape and Tobacco Education for Adults



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Vape and Tobacco Education for Students

The Real Cost

“The Real Cost” is hosted by FDA’s Center for Tobacco Products. “The Real Cost” campaign educates at-risk teens on the harmful effects of vaping and cigarette smoking. The target audience is youth 12-17 years old.

> **The Real Cost** / therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

For more than 25 years, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids has fought to protect children and save lives from the #1 cause of preventable death: tobacco use.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids / tobaccofreekids.org

Truth Initiative

Truth Initiative is committed to a future free from lifelong addiction, fostering healthier lives and a more resilient nation. They’re the nation’s largest nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empowering quitting for all.

> **Truth Initiative** / truthinitiative.org

Recommended Training for Youth:

Vaping: Know the Truth, Truth Initiative

- 8th-12th grade youth
- 6 digital lessons that are 15 minutes each
- This training is free of cost and can be done in a classroom setting or by individuals.



Vape and Tobacco Education for Students, *cont.*

Recommended Presentation Curriculum:

Let's Make Healthy Choices, Iowa HHS

- 3rd-6th grade youth
- 1 lesson

Stanford Medicine Tobacco Prevention Toolkit

- You and Me, Together Vape-Free
 - *Elementary School: 2 lessons*
 - *Middle School: 5 lessons*
 - *High School: 5 lessons*
- Healthy Futures: Alternative-to-Suspension Program
 - *Middle School, High School and/or Young Adults: 60 minute self-paced or a 2- to 4-hour interactive facilitated course*
- Not so Sweet: Oral Nicotine & Smokeless Tobacco Curriculum
 - *Middle School and High School: 2 lessons*

- Healthy Habits, Healthy Planet
 - *Middle School and High School: 3 lessons*
- What's Menthol Got to Do With It?
 - *All Ages: 2 lessons*
- Un-PACK-ing Cigarettes
 - *All Ages: 1 lesson*
- Hookah TellMe?
 - *All Ages: 1 lesson*

Tobacco Prevention Community Based Organizations (CBOs):

CBOs exist throughout the state and are available to provide education to youth and adults. To find your local CBO, email: bhassistance@hhs.iowa.gov

Education Resources to Avoid

Tobacco companies rely on youth and young adults to become “replacement smokers” for the adult smokers who quit smoking or die due to tobacco-related illnesses. Many cigarette and vape companies have proposed their own youth tobacco prevention curriculum and funding for their version of “anti-youth smoking” programs to schools. One study concluded that tobacco industry-sponsored youth smoking prevention programs are not effective and do more harm than good for tobacco control and prevention.

Vape and Tobacco Education for Adults

For Parents

An advisory should be issued to notify parents of the policy, and educational resources should be provided.

Some resources include:

- > **Centers for Disease Control** / [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)
- > **Office of the Surgeon General** / [hhs.gov/surgeongeneral](https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral)
- > **Quitline Iowa** / [quitlineiowa.org](https://www.quitlineiowa.org)
- > **My Life, My Quit** / [mylifemyquit.com](https://www.mylifemyquit.com)



For Staff

An annual presentation/training should be held on tobacco-related school policies for all staff, including teaching staff, bus drivers, aides, food service workers and maintenance staff. Presentation templates, a pre-recorded webinar about vapes in schools, and technical assistance is available from Iowa HHS.

Brief Tobacco Intervention Online Training

The administrators, school nurses and counselors who are interested in learning how to effectively talk to students, staff and families about their tobacco or nicotine use in less than three minutes are encouraged to take the Brief Tobacco Intervention Training. The training is free and takes about 30-45 minutes. CEUs are available for some professions.

More information can be found at

- > **Quitline Iowa** / [quitlineiowa.org/en-us/health-professionals/education](https://www.quitlineiowa.org/en-us/health-professionals/education)
- > **My Life, My Quit** / ia.mylifemyquit.org/en-us/resources/educators

Communication Tools and Signage

- ▶ Communicating Your Tobacco and Nicotine Free School Policy
- ▶ Posters Available for Order or Printing



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Communication Tools and Signage, *cont.*

School Policy

Many communities and schools have found that tobacco and nicotine free policies are largely self-enforcing (meaning that people generally respect the rules, as long as they know about them). Communicating that your school has a tobacco and nicotine free policy is crucial to the policy's success. Additional communication resources can be found in the Appendix on page 44.

Communicating the Policy to Students:

In-school student announcements: Involve student groups or clubs in developing and delivering announcements about the policy. (p. 45)

Student handbook: Update the student handbook as soon as possible to reflect the full policy and its definitions, as well as the consequences for policy violations.

Student pledges: Ask students participating in sports or academic groups and clubs to sign a pledge to be drug, tobacco and nicotine free.

Student-designed publicity: 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.

Student advocates: Find a group of students that are excited about the policy, or helped adopt it, to tell their peers and lead the policy change.

Communicating the Policy to Staff:

Staff memo/email: Inform school staff annually about the policy with an official memo or staff email. (p. 46)

Communicating the Policy to Parents:

Parent letters: Send a letter to all parents and guardians notifying them of the policy, including background information on why the policy is necessary and an outline of consequences for policy violations. (p. 47)

Communicating violations: Have letters ready to notify parents of student policy violations.

Communicating Your Tobacco and Nicotine Free School Policy

Communicating the Policy to Visitors:

Signage: Tobacco and nicotine free signage should be posted at all entrances to school buildings, athletic facilities, grounds and parking lots. **Signage is available for free at hhs.iowa.gov/smokefreeair.**

Event announcements: Announce the policy at athletic and other school events, meetings, concerts and plays. Include information about the policy in event bulletins and flyers.

Newspaper article/advertisement: Work with your local newspaper to create a story or advertisement about the school's policy.

Official memo: Inform vendors who provide deliveries or services on a regular basis of the policy with an official memo.

➤ Watch the Iowa HHS Tobacco Prevention website for updates on samples.

AVAILABLE SAMPLES



SMOKEFREE AIR ACT SIGNAGE
No smoking
4" x 6"



SMOKEFREE AIR ACT SIGNAGE
Tobacco and Nicotine Free
4" x 6"

Available for Order or Printing

Putting up posters in hallways, school bathrooms and locker rooms can be a great way to remind students of the tobacco and nicotine free policy at your school, but they can also be a great way to spread the message that smoking or vaping is not cool and is not healthy. Recruit school clubs and groups to help design posters for your school, or check out posters created by Iowa HHS or organizations like the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Sometimes they'll even send you materials for free!

AVAILABLE SAMPLES



Get additional items here:

- > yourlifeiowa.org/resource-center/products/tobacco
- > hhs.iowa.gov/istep
- > countertobacco.org/media-gallery/print-campaigns

Policy Compliance and Enforcement

► Alternatives to Suspension



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Policy Compliance and Enforcement

Enforcement Responsibility

Enforcement should be viewed as a shared responsibility of all staff, students and visitors. Enforcement should be clear and consistent—every violation, every time.

Sample Consequences for Violations

Students

Students who violate the policy will be provided information on cessation. The tobacco products or other devices will be confiscated. Student violations may also result in parent/guardian notification, substance abuse assessments, participation in tobacco education program, suspension or ineligibility to participate in extracurricular activities, community service and/or notification of law enforcement.

For alternatives to suspension and expulsion, please refer to page 27.

Staff

Staff who violate this policy will be offered a referral to cessation services. Multiple violations are grounds for disciplinary action.

Visitors

Visitors who violate this policy will be asked to comply. Individuals who fail to comply upon request may be referred to the principal or other supervisory personnel and may be directed to leave school property and may forfeit any admission fee. Law enforcement may also be contacted. Repeated violations may result in the individual being prohibited from entering school property for a specified period.

These sample consequences were taken from the Public Health Law Center's Model.



Alternatives to Suspension

School policies regulating the use of possession of tobacco and nicotine products, including vapes and nicotine pouches, often contain punitive measures for student violations. The following guides school administrators on how to implement alternative measures to suspension and expulsion, which are often used to enforce school tobacco and nicotine free policies.

The Importance of School

School years are critical for the physical, social and educational development needed for success both in school and in life. Research shows penalties like expulsion and suspension contribute to negative educational and life outcomes, undermining schools' goals for supporting healthy student development.⁶

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education issued a report, "Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline." That report finds that some of the harms from suspension and expulsion include a decreased likelihood to graduate on time, increased drop-out rate and an increased likelihood of involvement with the criminal court system.⁷

The negative consequences of using expulsions and suspensions are not limited to the expelled or suspended student. High rates of school suspensions are associated with lower scores on standardized tests and overall academic achievement of the entire student body. The DOE recommends that "schools should...explicitly reserve the use of out-of-school [punishments] for the most egregious disciplinary infractions that threaten school safety," such as bringing a firearm to school.⁷

Why Counseling and Education May Help

Using suspension and expulsion to penalize prohibited tobacco use may not be reasonable considering the tobacco targeted marketing, science of addiction and long-term consequences associated with expulsion and suspension. School policies should attempt to address the underlying addiction to tobacco in lieu of punitive measures, which may exacerbate the problem and not deter future use. While schools have an interest in prohibiting behavior that is disruptive and harmful to health, schools may consider weighing the severity of the infraction with the consequences and effectiveness of the punishment. According to the CDC, the most effective approaches to helping youth quit tobacco use are through counseling and education.⁸

Alternatives to Suspension, *cont.*

Model Disciplinary Matrix

Schools seeking to avoid excessively punitive measures in their Tobacco and Nicotine Free Policy may consider the following alternative language for students who violate the Policy:

Any student violations of this Policy shall result in the following measures:

The first violation shall result in confiscation of tobacco products, notification of parents and/or guardians, as well as the following:

- 1**
 - a. A student meeting and individual student assessment with a chemical health educator or designated staff to discuss commercial tobacco use and school policy.
 - b. Offering student information about available cessation programs and resources such as My Life My Quit brochures, which can be ordered free by contacting bhassistance@hhs.iowa.gov.

The second violation shall result in confiscation of tobacco products, notification of parents and/or guardians, as well as the following:

- 2**
 - a. Student participation and completion in My Life My Quit, a youth tobacco cessation program.
 - b. A student meeting with a chemical health educator or designated school staff with parents and/or guardians to discuss tobacco use and school policy.

The third and any subsequent violation shall result in confiscation of tobacco products, notification of parents and/or guardians, as well as the following:

- 3**
 - a. Student participation and completion in My Life My Quit, a youth tobacco cessation program.
 - b. A student meeting with a chemical health educator or designated school staff with parents and/or guardians to discuss tobacco use and school policy.
 - c. Educational community service hours.

Alternatives to Suspension, *cont.*

Steps to Implementing My Life My Quit as an Alternative to Suspension

STEP 1

Contact the Iowa HHS Tobacco Prevention team for help getting started.

> **Email:** bhassistance@hhs.iowa.gov



STEP 2

Make sure your school has a tobacco and nicotine free policy in place. You can use this toolkit to find model policies, tips on creating a strong policy, communication strategies, as well as how to enforce your policy. If you need technical assistance with policy creation or adoption, please reach out to the contact information in Step 1.



STEP 3

Order brochures and other marketing materials from the Iowa HHS at by emailing bhassistance@hhs.iowa.gov to give to parents and students who have questions about the My Life My Quit youth tobacco cessation program.



STEP 4

When the student enrolls in the program, they will receive an email stating their enrollment. They can use that email to prove their enrollment. Once the student has completed the program, they will receive a Certificate of Completion that they can provide to the school administration for proof of program completion.

Most program participants will complete the program in 8 weeks or less. If the participant has not completed the program in the 8-week period, they can ask for additional proof from their quit coach that they are still enrolled in the program.

Cessation Support

- ▶ Cessation Support for Students
- ▶ Cessation Support for Adults



IOWA NICOTINE FREE SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

Cessation Support for Students

The My Life My Quit program is a free and confidential service for kids who want help quitting all forms of tobacco, including vaping and nicotine pouches. Our tobacco treatment specialists have completed extensive training on adolescent cognitive and psychosocial development from a psychologist and professor at Stanford University who specializes in adolescent tobacco prevention.

By enrolling, participants receive:

- Five one-on-one coaching sessions, usually scheduled every 7-10 days. Coaching helps teens develop a quit plan, identify triggers, practice refusal skills and receive ongoing support for changing behaviors.
- Self-help and educational materials designed for teens, with input from teens.
- Additional support by phone, by text message or by online chat.

As an educator, you have as much (or more) contact with teens as their parents and healthcare professionals, and the messages you provide often shape their behavior choices. Your promotion of the My Life My Quit program is important to teens looking for resources to quit using tobacco. National Jewish Health operates tobacco quitlines in numerous states around the country and has helped more than one million people with their quit attempts.

> **For more information, visit** mylifemyquit.com.



Cessation Support for Adults

Adults can text 'START' to 300500 or call Quitline Iowa 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1.800.784.8669) for information and one-on-one coaching. This free service is available to all people living in Iowa who are ready to quit any form of tobacco or nicotine, including vaping and nicotine pouches. Quitline Iowa is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week online or by phone.

Telephone counseling is available in English, Spanish and 150 other languages. Trained Quit Coaches provide participants support to create an individual plan for quitting tobacco and fighting cravings. Adult callers may be eligible to receive a Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) Starter Kit.

> **For more information, visit** quitlineiowa.org.



Youth Engagement and ISTEP



IOWA NICOTINE FREE SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

Youth Engagement and ISTEP

ISTEP (Iowa Students for Tobacco Education and Prevention)

It's pretty amazing when like-minded young people come together for a good cause. And that's exactly what happens in every ISTEP chapter in our state.

ISTEP is a statewide, youth-led movement with chapters consisting of one adult advisor and a minimum of 3 young people in grades 7 through 12. Chapters focus on raising awareness and educating their peers and community members about the harms of tobacco and vaping through street marketing events, annual ISTEP Summit and more.

ISTEP Mission

- Change the social attitude toward all tobacco and nicotine use
- Raise awareness of the harms of tobacco and nicotine use through education
- Inspire and support cessation among people who use tobacco and nicotine
- Expand leadership skills to positively impact peers in making healthy lifestyle choices, such as being tobacco and nicotine free
- Address mental health concerns in relation to tobacco and nicotine use

Reasons for Youth to Join ISTEP

- Opportunities to attend statewide trainings and events
- Potential to participate in the ISTEP Executive Council
- Plan events and participate in strategies to reduce tobacco use in Iowa
- Educate peers about the harmful effects of tobacco and the manipulative marketing tactics of the tobacco industry
- Participate in local policy development and implementation in their community
- Gain experience with local and statewide activism, teambuilding and leadership development

Youth Engagement and ISTEP, *Cont.*

ISTEP

Leadership Opportunities

ISTEP has many leadership opportunities both at the state level by joining the ISTEP Executive Council and at the local level through chapters.

State Leadership

The ISTEP Executive Council is what truly keeps the program youth led. The council consists of 9th through 12th grade youth across Iowa who serve as leaders of the program. It's made up of approximately 10-15 members, one of whom is elected as the ISTEP president for a one-year term. The council plans annual street marketing events and activity kits, plans and leads the annual ISTEP Summit and makes big campaign decisions.

This group is supported by Jill Wright, the ISTEP Coordinator with Iowa HHS in the Behavioral Health Division. The council meets virtually on a regular basis on ISTEP initiatives such as upcoming street marketing events, presentation opportunities and summit planning.

However, about three times a year the Council meets in person in the Des Moines area for Council Retreats and the annual ISTEP Summit. Council retreats focus on development leadership skills, as well as team building to increase rapport and engagement among the group.

To serve on the Council, youth must:

- Be in grades 9 through 12.
- Be tobacco and nicotine free, including vaping.
- Act as a leader and spokesperson for the ISTEP program.
- Attend and participate in Council activities and meetings regularly.
- Attend and lead the annual ISTEP Summit alongside other Council members with help from the ISTEP Coordinator.
- Be in regular communication regarding Council initiatives with the ISTEP Coordinator.
- Be active in their local chapter, if applicable.



Youth Engagement and ISTEP, *Cont.*

Starting an ISTEP Chapter

Chapters can be big or small. Current chapter members range from 3 to 200! But no matter the situation, creating a chapter is simple; one adult chapter advisor and a minimum of three youth members in grades 7 through 12 is needed. Then, the adult chapter advisor registers the chapter on hhs.iowa.gov/istep.

ISTEP chapters can be formed in any setting where 7th through 12th grade youth meet. Chapters are most commonly formed in a school setting, however the ISTEP program has a goal to expand this. Think outside the box — chapters can be made up of members from a church youth group, scout troop, 4-H group, YMCA program, sports team, or any other community setting where 7th through 12th grade youth meet.

The structure of the chapter is completely up to the local adult chapter advisor. It is recommended to have separate chapters for youth in middle school versus youth in high school, yet collaboration among age levels is encouraged. For example, the high school chapter members can take the lead of an event and model their leadership skills to the younger students, while middle school youth can bring their never-ending energy and excitement.

It's also up to the chapter to decide how they'd like to be structured. It's common to elect a president, vice president and secretary. Establishing chapter requirements and rules, keeping meeting minutes and an attendance log is recommended to have a successful active chapter, however, is not required.

ISTEP

chapters

can be formed in any setting where

7TH

through

12TH

grade youth meet



Youth Engagement and ISTEP, *Cont.*

How to Register an ISTEP Chapter

- 1 Visit hhs.iowa.gov/istep.
- 2 Click “Register your ISTEP Chapter here.” It’s the first bolded bullet.
- 3 Fill out the form. Information needed for the form includes: the chapter name, address, member count, advisor name and advisor email address.
- 4 Click “Submit.”

Once the form is submitted, the Iowa HHS ISTEP coordinator is notified and will send an introductory email to the chapter advisor listed within the form. This email will include helpful links and resources to support the chapter’s next steps.

Chapter Advisors

An ISTEP chapter advisor can be a teacher, an adult who works with another youth organization in the community (4-H, FFA, church groups, scout troops, etc.) or the ASO staff. ISTEP takes a youth-led approach to leadership, allowing youth to take the initiative in planning and implementing activities. The role of the adult chapter advisor can include, but isn’t limited to:

- Assisting with planning and implementing activities
- Ensuring chapter members follow through with their plans
- Gathering Youth Code of Conduct and Participation consent forms
- Communicating with the youth members’ parents and the Iowa HHS ISTEP coordinator
- Helping youth members get to and from activities such as the annual ISTEP Summit



Youth Engagement and ISTEP, *Cont.*

How much time does an ISTEP Chapter require?

This is completely up to the chapter. However, ISTEP never has a dull moment and there is always something that can be done. Each chapter is encouraged to participate in the street marketing events and activity kits provided by the Council each year. Additionally, chapters may choose to put on events unique to their community. It's up to the chapter to decide how often they'd like to meet, but it's recommended to meet once a month or every other month to stay up to date on upcoming activities, newest tobacco prevention ideas, chapter event planning, etc.

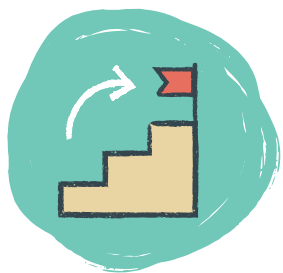
At the beginning of the school year, it's recommended chapter members decide how many activities they'd like to implement during the year. For reference, it's common to have three meetings per one event.

For example:

- 1 Planning Meeting –**
Determine details of the event.
- 2 Implementation of Event –**
Hold the event.
- 3 Follow-up Meeting –**
Discuss how the event went, what could be done differently in the future, then determine the date of the next meeting to plan the next event.

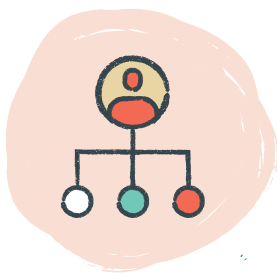
First Meeting of the Year

The first meeting of the year, also known as the ISTEP chapter orientation meeting, is extremely important. Starting the year with clear expectations is key to having a successful chapter. Below are a few things to think about:



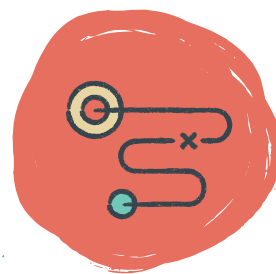
Establish goals for the year.

How many street marketing events will be done? Will the chapter participate in the statewide events planned by the Council?



Determine chapter structure.

Will a president, vice president and secretary be elected? How will rules be established? Are there attendance requirements?



Develop a plan of action.

When will meetings be held — every second Thursday of the month after school? When and where will events happen for the year — home sporting events, parent teacher conference night, etc?

Youth Engagement and ISTEP, *Cont.*

Social Media

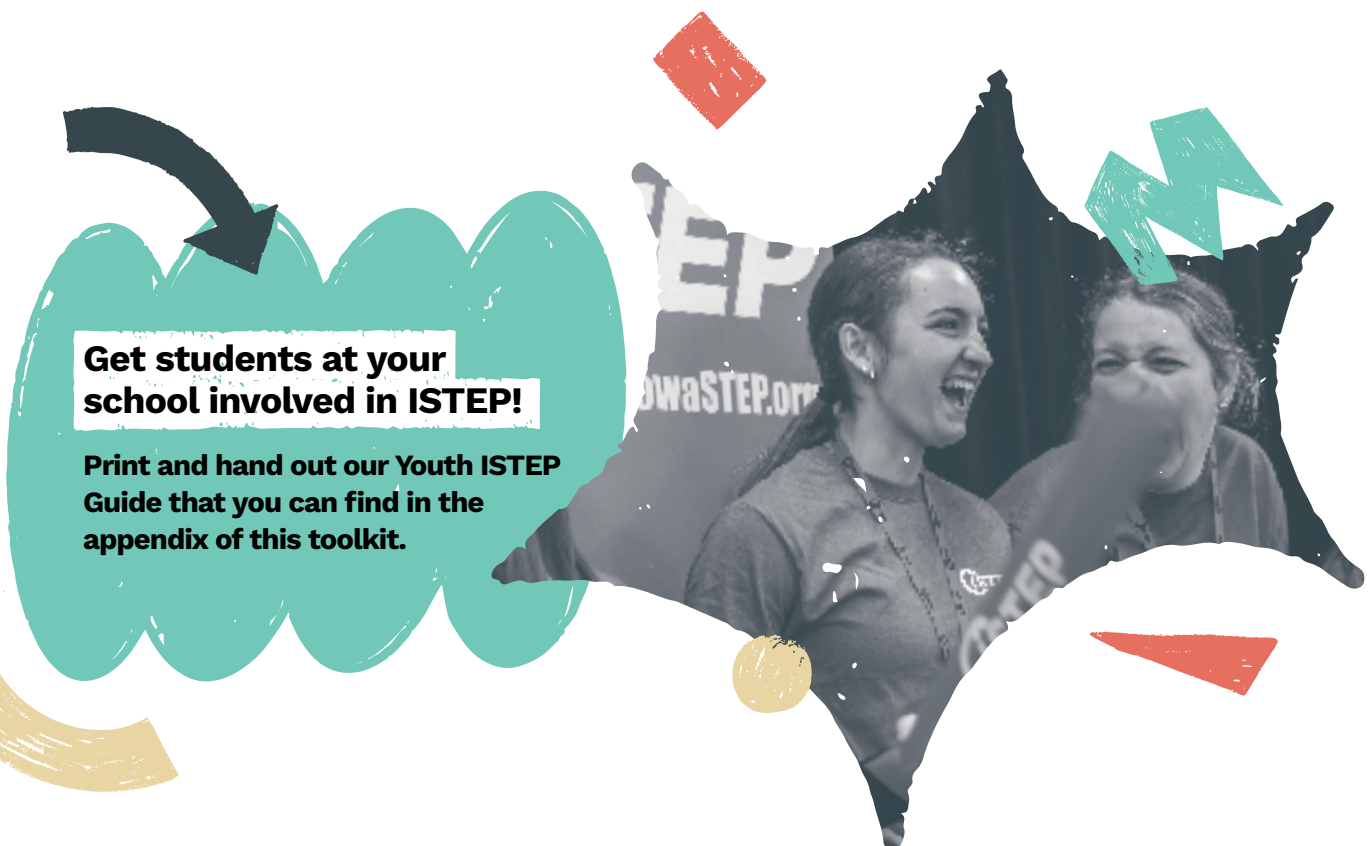
Chapters can share pictures from their recent activities by emailing them to the Iowa HHS ISTEP Coordinator (jill.wright@hhs.iowa.gov) to post on the ISTEP social media accounts or tagging @IowaSTEP on Instagram and Facebook.

> **Facebook:** facebook.com/IowaSTEP

> **Instagram:** instagram.com/IowaSTEP

As a reminder, each young person needs to complete the ISTEP Chapter Youth Code of Conduct and Participation form in order for media such as pictures and/or videos to be shared publicly. It's the chapter's advisor's responsibility for collecting and filing these.

> **Learn more about ISTEP at** hhs.iowa.gov/istep.



Get students at your school involved in ISTEP!

Print and hand out our Youth ISTEP Guide that you can find in the appendix of this toolkit.

More Information and Resources

- ▶ More Information and Resources
- ▶ Sources



IOWA NICOTINE FREE SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

More Information and Resources

Youth Tobacco Use: Results from the National Youth Tobacco Survey

<https://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/PublicHealthEducation/ProtectingKidsfromTobacco/ucm405173.htm>

Report: Tobacco Product Use Among Middle and High School Students — National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2024 | MMWR

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7341a2.htm?s_cid=mm7341a2_w

Infographic: FDA Tobacco Education & Prevention Resources: Posters, Flyers, & More | 2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey Infographic

https://digitalmedia.hhs.gov/tobacco/print_materials/CTP-280

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/>

How Schools Can Help Students Stay Tobacco Free

<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0153.pdf>

Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General

<https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youthtobacco-use/full-report.pdf>

Public Health Law Center's Model Tobacco-Free Policy for Kansas Schools

<https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Kansas-tobacco-free-schools-model-policies-2017.pdf>

Truth Initiative: Safer ≠ Safe

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDVVQDN6OECnkDWTaZoMLZH81376hREHF>

Healthy Futures Tobacco Prevention Curriculum

<https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit/healthy-futures-nicotine.html>

E-cigarettes and Youth: What Educators and Coaches Need to Know

<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/empower-vape-free-youth-campaign.html>



Sources

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2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Electronic Cigarettes: What's the Bottom Line? Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/ecigarettes/pdfs/Electronic-CigarettesInfographic-508.pdf

3 Hsu G, Sun JY, Zhu SH. Evolution of Electronic Cigarette Brands from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017: Analysis of Brand Websites. J Med Internet Res. 2018 20(3):e80.

4 Ambrose BK, et al. Flavored Tobacco Product Use among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014. JAMA. 2016;314(17):1871-1873.

5 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

6 Lamont, J. H., Devore, C. D., Allison, M., Ancona, R., Barnett, S.E., Gunther, R., et al & Young, T. (2013). Out-of-school suspension and expulsion. Pediatrics, 131(3), e1000-e1007. <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/fsl/aap-out-of-school-suspension-and-expulsion.pdf>.

7 Guiding Principles: A Resource for Improving School Climate and Discipline, U.S. Department of Education (2014).

8 PHS Guideline Recommendations: How to Help Adolescents Quit Smoking, CDC (last accessed January 10, 2018). https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/cessation/pdfs/phs_adolescents_508.pdf.

Thank You

You're Helping Make Iowa Schools Healthier!

Iowa students deserve a tobacco and nicotine free environment where they can flourish. By implementing and/or improving your school's policies, you're helping make your school a healthier place for all students, staff and visitors.



Appendix

- ▶ Sample Event Announcements
- ▶ Sample Staff Memo
- ▶ Sample Parent Letter
- ▶ Youth ISTEP Guide





Sample Event Announcements

School events, such as sporting events, concerts and theater performances, are an important place to remind visitors of your tobacco and nicotine free school policy. The following are a few options for announcements to be used at school sporting events and can also be easily adapted for use at concerts, theater performances and other school events.

15 SECONDS: For the safety of our students, [school] is proud to have a 100 percent tobacco and nicotine free school policy. At this time, we would like to remind our home fans and visitors that the use of tobacco products or vapes during tonight's sporting event is strictly prohibited. We appreciate your support and would like to thank you for keeping our school and stadium tobacco and nicotine free. Enjoy the game!

15 SECONDS: In Iowa, an estimated 1,200 kids under age 18 will become new daily smokers each year. That is one reason why [school] has a 100 percent tobacco and nicotine free school policy. Tobacco and vape use of any kind is strictly prohibited on all school property, including in and around the stadium and parking lots. Thank you for your support and for helping us keep our students tobacco and nicotine free!

15 SECONDS: Smoking kills about 1,300 Americans every day. Nearly 90 percent of adult smokers started smoking before they turned 18 years old. Refraining from tobacco and vape use at school athletic events supports a healthy environment for everyone. This is one reason why [school] is 100 percent tobacco and nicotine free. Thank you for your support and enjoy the game!

15 SECONDS: We would like to remind our visitors and fans that tobacco and vape use of any kind during tonight's game is prohibited. This means no tobacco or vape use anytime, by anyone, anywhere on campus—including stadiums and parking lots. We appreciate your support and thank you for keeping our school and stadium tobacco and nicotine free!

30 SECONDS: We would like to remind our visitors and fans that use of tobacco and vapes of any kind during tonight's game is prohibited. Secondhand smoke, even outdoors, can be dangerous for people (especially kids) with other health problems such as asthma and allergies. Vape aerosol is not just water vapor. In addition to nicotine, vape aerosol can contain heavy metals and other chemicals and toxins known to cause cancer. This is one reason why [school] is 100 percent tobacco and nicotine free. We appreciate your support and hope you enjoy the game!

Dear Staff,

To ensure our school maintains a positive, healthy learning environment, [school] has approved a tobacco and nicotine free school policy that prohibits all tobacco and vape use by students, staff and visitors at all times, including school events after regular school hours and at off-site school activities. This policy also prohibits students, staff and visitors from bringing tobacco and e-cigarette products to school. A copy of the policy is attached.

We have put this policy in place for three main reasons:

- **Help Students Be Tobacco and Nicotine Free:** Youth spend a great deal of their time at school and school events. Keeping tobacco and vapes out of the school environment means students don't see their friends or adults using tobacco or vapes, which helps make tobacco and vape use less socially acceptable.
- **Provide A Healthy and Positive Environment:** More than 1 in 4 Iowa high school students were exposed to secondhand smoke in a public place in the last week. Secondhand smoke can make nonsmokers sick or worsen breathing problems like asthma.
- **Prevent A New Nicotine-Addicted Generation:** National statistics show that youth are using vapes now more than ever before. We have a responsibility to educate our students about the dangers of nicotine addiction and help them to live tobacco and nicotine free lives.

As staff, it is critical you are aware of and in compliance with our tobacco and nicotine free school policy. All of our policies must be enforced in order to be effective. It is also important we recognize our position as role models for our youth. All school personnel are required to enforce and comply with our tobacco and nicotine free school policy.

Here at [school], staff should refer students who are found violating the policy to [customize this information for your school]. Ignoring violations or only warning students compromises the effectiveness of our policy. It is our job to work together to provide a positive and healthy learning environment for our youth and fellow staff. As a tobacco and nicotine free school, we are paving the way for a lifetime of healthy decision-making in our students.

There are many helpful resources for youth or adults in our community who use tobacco or vapes and want to quit. Iowa has a free tobacco Quitline that anyone can use at no charge by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW or texting "START" to 300500, and a youth tobacco cessation program, called My Life My Quit, where students can text "Start My Quit" to 36072 or call 855.891.9989. Web-based services are also available at quitlineiowa.org and mylifemyquit.com.

We appreciate your help in supporting this policy. If you have questions or comments about the policy, please feel free to contact [Point of Contact].

Dear Parents,

On [date], [school] approved a comprehensive tobacco and nicotine free school policy. This policy prohibits all tobacco and vape use by everyone (students, staff, parents and visitors), everywhere on campus, at all times, including school events after regular school hours. This policy also prohibits the use of tobacco products and vapes during off-site school-sponsored events. A copy of the policy is attached.

We have put this policy in place for three main reasons:

- **Help Students Be Tobacco and Nicotine Free:** Youth spend a great deal of their time at school and school events. Keeping tobacco and vapes out of the school environment means students don't see their friends or adults using tobacco or vapes, which helps make tobacco and vape use less socially acceptable.
- **Provide A Healthy and Positive Environment:** More than 1 in 4 Iowa high school students were exposed to secondhand smoke in a public place in the last week. Secondhand smoke can make nonsmokers sick or worsen breathing problems like asthma.
- **Prevent A New Nicotine-Addicted Generation:** National statistics show that youth are using vapes now more than ever before. We have a responsibility to educate our students about the dangers of nicotine addiction and help them to live tobacco and nicotine free lives.

Tobacco and nicotine free schools provide positive role modeling for students. Schools are a place where children develop lifelong behaviors and we are committed to ensuring smoking, chewing tobacco and/or using e-cigarettes are not among those behaviors.

We have installed signs about the policy throughout the school campus. We will also make regular announcements at school events to remind students and visitors that tobacco and e-cigarette use is not allowed at these events or on school property.

There are many helpful resources for youth or adults in our community who use tobacco or vapes and want to quit. Iowa has a free tobacco Quitline that anyone can use at no charge by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW or texting "START" to 300500, and a youth tobacco cessation program, called My Life My Quit, where students can text "Start My Quit" to 36072 or call 855.891.9989. Web-based services are also available at quitlineiowa.org and mylifemyquit.com.

We appreciate your help in supporting this policy. If you have questions or comments about the policy, please feel free to contact [Point of Contact].

Youth ISTEP Guide

Ready to Step Up Against Vaping and Other Tobacco Products?

Join ISTEP or Start a Chapter at Your School!

You know that youth are still a target when it comes to tobacco, like vaping, nicotine pouches and everything else companies will think of next. That's where youth like you come in!

Iowa Students for Tobacco Education and Prevention (ISTEP) is a statewide, youth-led movement that educates youth on tobacco control and prevention, tobacco use among youth and unites communities to create one voice against the tobacco industry.

Why Join ISTEP?

- Make a difference in your community.
- Make friends that will last a lifetime.
- Make your college applications stand out.

ISTEP Mission

- Change the social attitude toward all tobacco and nicotine use.
- Raise awareness of the harms of tobacco and nicotine use through education.
- Inspire and support cessation among people who use tobacco and nicotine.
- Expand leadership skills to positively impact peers in making healthy lifestyle choices, such as being tobacco and nicotine free.
- Address mental health concerns in relation to tobacco and nicotine use.



Youth ISTEP Guide, *cont.*

How to Start an ISTEP Chapter

- Double-check to make sure there isn't already a chapter in your area by viewing the list of chapters at hhs.iowa.gov/istep-chapters.
- Find an adult to be the chapter advisor.
- Ask two friends to begin your chapter with you (minimum of three youth is required, and remember, you could collaborate with another group in your area).
- Ask your chapter advisor to register your ISTEP chapter online at hhs.iowa.gov/istep.
- Have fun! Publicize your chapter by doing street marketing events, sharing news through social media (Facebook, X, Instagram, etc.) and inviting press (local newspaper, TV or radio stations) to your events.

ISTEP members know the true unfiltered facts of tobacco and nicotine use. By sharing these facts with your peers, community leaders and loved ones through everyday conversations, street marketing events and the annual ISTEP Summit, you can help make a difference.

> **Learn more about ISTEP at** hhs.iowa.gov/istep.

> **Find more resources to download at** yourlifeiowa.org/resource-center/products/tobacco.



NOT YOUR AVERAGE CLUB

ISTEP Is a Movement



IOWA™

Health and
Human Services

Learn more
about ISTEP:



Check out our
Instagram:



It's Your Life Take Control

QUIT NOW

Text "START MY QUIT"
to 36072
or call 855.891.9989.

MY LIFE [★] MY QUIT™

IOWA™
Health and
Human Services



Keep Quitting

Get help quitting
tobacco and nicotine.

Text 'START' to 300500
1-800-QUIT NOW | [Quitlineiowa.org](https://quitlineiowa.org)