

RESOLUTION OF THE
BOARD OF HEALTH OF THE
TRI-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

A RESOLUTION DECLARING YOUTH VAPING A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

WHEREAS, the mission of the Board of Health and the Tri-County Health Department (“TCHD”) is to promote, protect and improve the lifelong health of individuals and communities in the Counties of Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas, Colorado (“TCHD Community”), through the effective use of data, evidence-based prevention strategies, leadership, advocacy, partnerships, and the promotion of health equity; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Public Health Act of 2008 requires the Tri-County Health Department Board of Health to develop and promote public policies necessary to secure the conditions necessary for a healthy community; and

WHEREAS, tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and Colorado, contributing to the death of over 480,000 people each year including 5,100 Coloradans; and

WHEREAS, electronic smoking device (ESD) use, or vaping, among youth is increasing at an alarming rate, with an estimated 27% of Colorado high school students vaping and ESDs now being the second-most used substance among Colorado high school students; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 an estimated 43.0% of high school students in Adams County, 39.1% of high school students in Arapahoe County, and 41.1% of high school students in Douglas County reported having ever used an ESD; and

WHEREAS, nicotine, the highly addicting ingredient in cigarettes, is also found in ESDs and has been proven to lead to lifelong addiction for youth and negatively impact adolescent brain development, including affecting working memory and attention; and

WHEREAS, youth who vape are four times more likely to start using traditional cigarettes after just one year compared to those youth who do not vape; and

WHEREAS, vaping has recently been associated with an outbreak of a newly recognized acute onset lung disorder, which can cause severe disease, high rates of hospitalization, and even death; and

WHEREAS, the vaping industry aggressively markets their products using the same tactics that have been proven to increase youth smoking. E-liquid flavors like cotton candy, banana split, gummy bears, and others appeal to kids, and the vaping industry uses these flavors and other advertising tactics to draw youth in; and

WHEREAS, retail regulations, including tobacco/nicotine retailer licensing, raising the minimum legal sales age, and banning flavored tobacco/nicotine products, when combined with strong enforcement and monitoring, help reduce illegal sales of tobacco and nicotine products to adolescents and reduces initiation and use of these products among young people; and

WHEREAS, interventions targeting youth, such as the Tobacco-Free Schools policy, provider screening and referral, and cessation support, are effective at reducing initiation and use of tobacco and nicotine products and improving cessation outcomes for youth; and

WHEREAS, tobacco/nicotine-free environments and policies have been demonstrated to encourage smokers to quit, discourage youth from starting smoking, and alter the perception of adolescents as to the social acceptability of tobacco/nicotine use; and

WHEREAS, protecting youth from tobacco and nicotine products by implementing proven prevention and intervention strategies, as well as policy, systems, and environmental change strategies, in collaboration with partner organizations and policy makers is strongly recommended by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) as “one of the most important things that a society can do to protect children’s health;” and

WHEREAS, building protective factors by changing social norms, encouraging more caregiver involvement, helping kids feel safe at school, and increasing positive social opportunities for our community’s youth are proven methods for reducing youth substance use, including tobacco/nicotine products, as well as reducing violence, hopelessness, and anxiety.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Health of TCHD, in order to address the public health crisis of vaping among adolescents and to protect the health of all young people in Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties hereby recommends the following actions by key community stakeholders:

1. School districts and schools: Communicate and consistently enforce Tobacco-Free Schools policies; adopt restorative discipline practices and promote alternatives to suspension in order to keep students engaged in the school environment; utilize comprehensive health education focused on life skills and decision-making; and support students and staff in their cessation journeys.
2. Local governments, including cities and counties: Consider strong retail regulations, including licensing of tobacco retailers, raising the minimum legal sales age, and banning sales of all flavored tobacco/nicotine products; policies restricting tobacco industry advertising and promotions at the point-of-sale; policies ensuring comprehensive tobacco/nicotine-free environments, including outdoor spaces such as parks and playgrounds; and interventions aimed at the price of all tobacco/nicotine products, including restricting couponing and discounts and increasing taxes.
3. Health Care Providers, especially pediatricians: Screen all patients for tobacco use, including ESD use or vaping, counsel on the harms of vaping and the importance of quitting, and refer to the Colorado Quitline or other developmentally-appropriate cessation support service. Refer to the American Academy of Pediatrics [clinical practice policy](#) to protect children from tobacco, nicotine, and tobacco smoke.
4. Retailers: Keep all tobacco/nicotine products behind the counter requiring clerk assistance to purchase, check identification of all customers purchasing tobacco/nicotine products, train all clerks in responsible tobacco/nicotine sales practices, and establish a corporate culture of not selling to minors and following all applicable laws.
5. Parents and Guardians: Educate yourselves about the dangers of vaping, have open conversations with your children, and support young people in their cessation journeys.

Parents wishing to quit tobacco/nicotine use themselves should speak with their physicians and call the Colorado Quitline.

6. Youth: Speak with your peers about healthy stress coping and healthy decision making, get involved in after school activities and other positive pro-social activities, model healthy behaviors for peers and younger students or siblings, and advocate for school- or community-level policy change. Young people wishing to quit vaping are encouraged to speak with their parents, a school nurse, physician, or other trusted adult and call the Colorado Quitline or utilize another age-appropriate cessation support.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Tri-County Health Department is committed to dedicating resources to assisting stakeholders with these changes and can provide technical assistance, model policy language, training, and selected material and financial resources directly to communities and stakeholders.

Adopted and made effective by the Board of Health of TCHD this 15th day of October, 2019.



Thomas Fawell, MD, President
Tri-County Health Department Board of Health



Naomi Steenson, RD, Secretary
Tri-County Health Department Board of Health