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How to talk about vaping and what we're doing about it

How should we talk about vaping in our community?

Focus on the basics. Vaping is harmful for youth. Because it typically delivers nicotine, often in very high levels, vaping harms developing brains, is addictive, and makes youth much more likely to start smoking regular cigarettes. Vaping also is associated with other risky youth behavior.

Although vaping by adults, especially those who already smoke, raises more nuanced issues, **there is no question that vaping harms kids.** Yet, because vaping is new, parents and their children may not fully appreciate its risks.

At times, when addressing youth use, you may get pushback from adults who use vape products. Depending on the specific situation, you have the opportunity to not engage, to reinforce that you are focused on preventing youth use, or focus on the uncertainty surrounding vaping, and the known health effects of nicotine. You might also point out that adults who have quit smoking by vaping are actually in the minority. Only about 2% of Colorado adults fit in this category, compared to 27% of high school students who might never have been exposed to nicotine at all but who are now vaping. **Research may conclude that vaping is safer for adults than smoking regular cigarettes but that doesn't mean it's safe** – and that's important information for adults who don't already smoke, about 25% of adults who vape.

Focus communications on youth, parents, and other askable adults. While knowledge among young people about the risks of vaping has increased over the past few years, according to the 2017 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey only 50% of Colorado youth believe it is risky. Parents and other askable adults may have heard about vaping but still have questions because it didn't exist when they were young.

Adults who are unsure about vaping may be open to hearing about its potential risks. For those who don't already vape regularly, it's important to stress that vaping may be safer than smoking but that doesn't mean it's safe, and no amount of vaping is safe for youth.

It is rarely productive to engage with adults who regularly vape. Many

smokers or former smokers who vape believe that it has helped them quit or reduce smoking. As a result, some are vocal proponents of vaping. While more research is being released about the harms of vaping, there are still too many unknowns to proactively engage in this conversation at this time.

As research advances, we may get more definitive guidance about whether vaping does or does not have potential as a harm reduction or smoking cessation strategy. Once there is a clear position based on scientific evidence, we will be able to develop appropriate messages to reach smokers or dual vape/cigarette users.

What resources about vaping are available from CDPHE?

CDPHE and SE2 have developed vaping resources for Grantees. Campaign materials may be found on COHealthResources.org while other resources are available on the Grantee Website (www.tobaccofreeco.org/grantee).

You may find a wide range of messages about vape and vaping [here](#).

For Parents and Askable Adults

- “Get the Facts,” an educational paid media campaign to reach parents and askable adults, encourages them to learn about vaping and talk with the youth in their lives. A full template campaign is available to Grantees in English and Spanish.
- Landing pages educate parents and askable adults on [Tobacco Free CO](#) and [Colorado Sin Tabaco](#).
- Complimentary educational resources for parents and askable adults are available on the Grantee Site in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- An earned media kit to support securing news coverage around the issue of youth vaping in your community is available on the Grantee Site [here](#).
- [This infographic](#) sharing results from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey 2017 is useful to highlight the extent of youth vaping in the state, as is this [health advisory](#).

For Youth and Young Adults

- “Know the Facts” is the original educational media campaign with messages and creative for youth and young adults. This campaign is meant to educate these audiences on vaping and its dangers, while noting that there is still a lot we do not know. A full template campaign is available to Grantees.
- A landing page on [Tobacco Is Nasty](#) for youth.
- A landing page for young adults on [Enough with the Puff](#).

What research was used to create these materials?

Parents and Askable Adult Materials

- Statewide quantitative survey of parents and askable adults to understand

their knowledge and opinions about youth vaping (n=500)

- Five qualitative focus groups with parents in Denver and Colorado Springs to further inform the campaign messaging and materials

Youth and Young Adult Materials

- Statewide quantitative surveys to understand knowledge and opinions about vaping among young adults (n=600)
- Qualitative focus groups to dig deeper into youth and young adults' attitudes and behavior

Additional Sources:

- The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, which provides data on youth use at the state and regional levels
- Secondary resources, which can be found in the footnotes of messages

What is the state doing about the problem of youth vaping?

- CDPHE has been active in addressing the youth vaping epidemic since 2017 when it launched a statewide educational campaign geared towards youth and young adults to dispel myths about vaping, alert youth to the dangers of nicotine addiction, and highlight the fact that much is still unknown about vaping and e-cigarettes. Social media content targets these audiences as well and materials have been made available to local health departments to use in schools and community spaces where youth spend their time, as well as with youth coalitions.
- In 2018, CDPHE launched a campaign to educate parents and askable adults about the dangers of youth vaping, and the need to talk with youth about the issue. The campaign includes digital, social media, search and radio ads in English and Spanish, as well as a partnership with Spanish-language television. The advertising was complimented by a digital influencer campaign and social media content.
 - Materials have been made available to local health departments to support their work in educating adults about this issue.
- Resources are available for parents and askable adults through TobaccoFreeCO.org (www.tobaccofreeco.org/know-the-facts) to help them learn more about vaping, how it's become a youth epidemic in Colorado, and how to talk about it with youth.
- CDPHE works with school districts across Colorado to educate teachers, administration, parents and community members about youth vaping in their specific communities and to find solutions.

- CDPHE supports local health departments and coalitions as they work to pass local policies in order to minimize the social impact of vaping and reduce youth access and use.
- In 2018, Colorado's QuitLine began offering quit support for youth as young as 12 years who are addicted to vaping. These resources are available via phone and web.
- November 2018 was declared Vape-Free November by then-Governor John Hickenlooper and CDPHE. The Governor signed an executive order directing state agencies to take action to address the youth vaping epidemic in Colorado. (This executive order remains in action.) Governor Hickenlooper also presented a Colorado Tobacco Prevention Blueprint highlighting recommendations to reduce the burden of tobacco and vaping on Colorado.
- A related advertising campaign, No More Vape Tricks, began in January 2019, highlighting the tricks the e-cigarette industry is playing to hook youth – a repeat of cigarette industry tactics from last century. This campaign is meant to educate parents and civically engaged Coloradans.