



September 2020

*This is an internal document for STEPP grantees only.*

## Prepping for Conversations with Media about Youth Vaping

Before you talk to the media, you'll want to anticipate questions you might get so you have answers prepared. Assume any conversation with a journalist is "on the record," meaning that you may be quoted in an article that they write. If you don't know the answer to a question that's posed to you, just say you need to get back to the journalist. Be sure to ask if the journalist is working under a deadline so you can get back to them in a timely manner.

To help you prepare, we've put together a list of frequently asked questions that you may be asked by reporters, along with CDPHE-approved answers. We encourage you to review the information provided in this document so you can be prepared to answer media inquiries. **While many of these answers will be the same no matter where you work within Colorado, on pages 7 and 8 we list questions you may get that are specific to your region and how to prepare to respond to those effectively.**

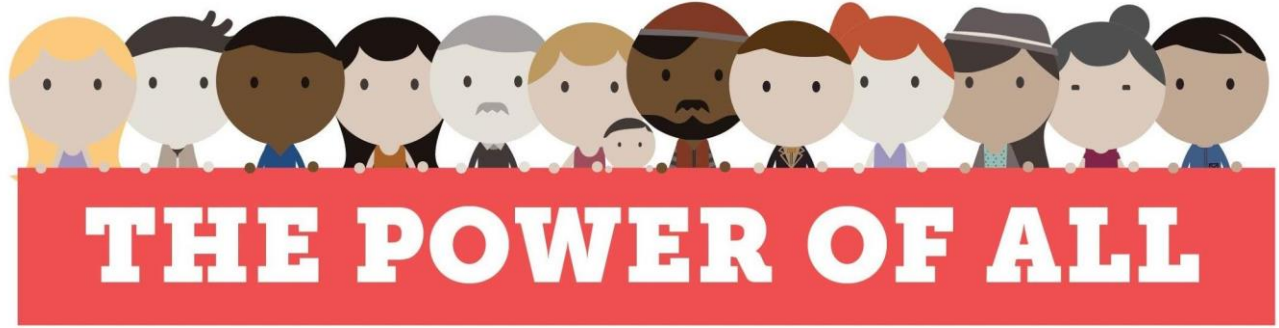
*If you have questions or need assistance, contact SE2, STEPP's communications technical assistance provider, at [TA@se2communications.com](mailto:TA@se2communications.com). We can help you develop answers for questions that you don't see addressed here.*

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### What is vaping?

Vaping is the act of inhaling aerosol created from liquid heated by an electronic device. This vapor commonly contains nicotine, flavoring and other additives. It also can contain THC, the chemical in marijuana that makes the user feel "high."

### What are the different vape products?



Popular terms for vaping devices include e-cigarettes, e-cigs, vaporizers, vape, vape pens, vapor pens, mods, tanks, e-hookah and hookah pens. These vary widely in size, shape and design. Some look like computer flash drives or highlighters, while others are bulky and box-like. To learn more, visit [Vaping 101: What You Need to Know](#). Disposable vape products, like Puff Bar, are popular among youth because they remain available in the marketplace and are typically filled with flavors that youth like. Juul is a popular brand that also is used generically to describe vape devices or as a verb to describe vaping: “Juuling.”

### What is in vape juice or e-liquid?

Vape juice, e-liquid, pods – these are all names for the liquid that is vaporized into an aerosol cloud. Vape juice most commonly contains three ingredients: propylene glycol and/or glycerin, chemicals for flavoring and nicotine.

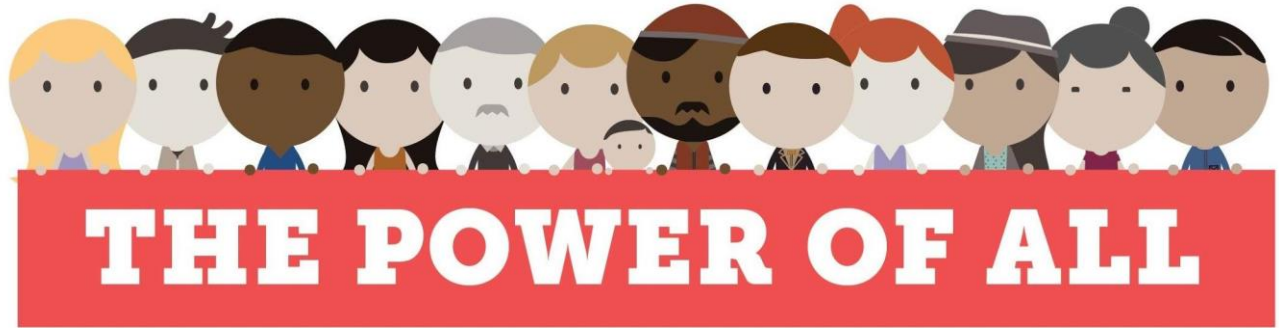
One Juul pod has the same amount of nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes. Some vape juice can also contain THC, the chemical in marijuana that makes the user feel “high.” Complicating the issue, vaping doesn’t give off the telltale smell of smoking marijuana or tobacco cigarettes so adults may not know if kids are vaping.

### Is vaping safe?

Youth use of tobacco products in any form is unsafe. Studies have shown that the aerosol in the vapor can contain dangerous toxins, including heavy metals, ultrafine particles and chemicals known to cause cancer and other diseases.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems Key Facts; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://chronicdata.cdc.gov/Policy/Electronic-Nicotine-Delivery-Systems-Key-Facts-Inf/nwhw-m4ki/data>



And most vape devices contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. Human brain development continues until age 25, and nicotine use during adolescence and young adulthood has been associated with lasting brain impairments, including effects on working memory and attention.<sup>2</sup>

Also troubling, some vape products are made by big tobacco companies, which have a history of prioritizing sales over safety.

A study released in August 2020 by the Stanford University School of Medicine found that vaping is linked to a substantially increased risk of COVID-19 among teenagers and young adults<sup>3</sup>

## Why do youth vape?

In focus groups sponsored by CPDHE in 2017, Colorado youth said they vaped because it was a social activity that seemed cool. They also described it as a fresh, fun alternative to smoking that was easier to conceal. Experts have also pointed to sweet flavors that appeal to kids and research has shown that many youth did not understand the health risks of vaping. The latest Healthy Kids Colorado Survey results show more youth are now aware of the risks, which demonstrates that education efforts are working.

## Why is vaping bad for teens?

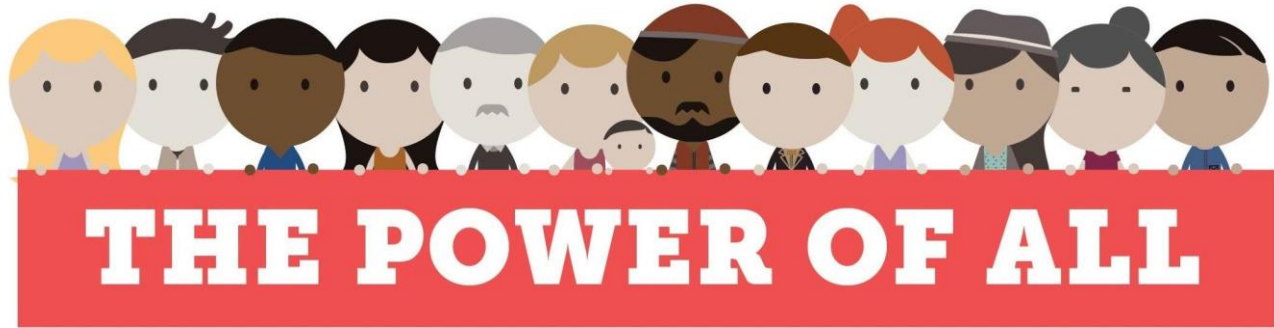
In addition to the health risks that can affect any vape user, vaping is particularly dangerous for teens. The use of nicotine – which is in most vape products – during adolescence and young adulthood has been associated with lasting brain impairments, including effects on working memory and attention.<sup>2</sup> The chemicals in the aerosol can also damage the lungs.<sup>4</sup> Using nicotine in adolescence may also

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<sup>2</sup> The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2014. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/sgr/50th-anniversary/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/50th-anniversary/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Vaping linked to COVID-19 risk in teens and young adults. Retrieved from <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2020/08/vaping-linked-to-covid-19-risk-in-teens-and-young-adults.html>

<sup>4</sup> Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems Key Facts; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://chronicdata.cdc.gov/Policy/Electronic-Nicotine-Delivery-Systems-Key-Facts-Inf/nwhw-m4ki/data>



increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.<sup>5</sup> And many teens who start vaping end up smoking cigarettes. A study of 12th graders found that those who vaped were more than four times more likely to start smoking.<sup>6</sup>

### Some teens say they just vape flavors, without nicotine or THC. Is that possible?

Studies have shown that most vaping products labeled “nicotine free” actually contain nicotine.<sup>5</sup> While some vapes do not contain nicotine or THC, most do -- often in very high concentrations. The safest option is for teens not to vape at all.

### Can teens buy these products?

[Under new Colorado and federal restrictions](#), vape products now cannot legally be sold to anyone under the age of 21, an increase from the previous minimum age of 18. Retailers who are caught in state compliance checks selling to younger people could lose their license to sell vape and other tobacco products. It is anticipated that a higher age limit will reduce access to teens and reduce teen use. Because some high school students are 18 years old, the previous lower age limit to purchase vape and tobacco products put them in the same social circles as younger students.

### How can I tell if kids are vaping?

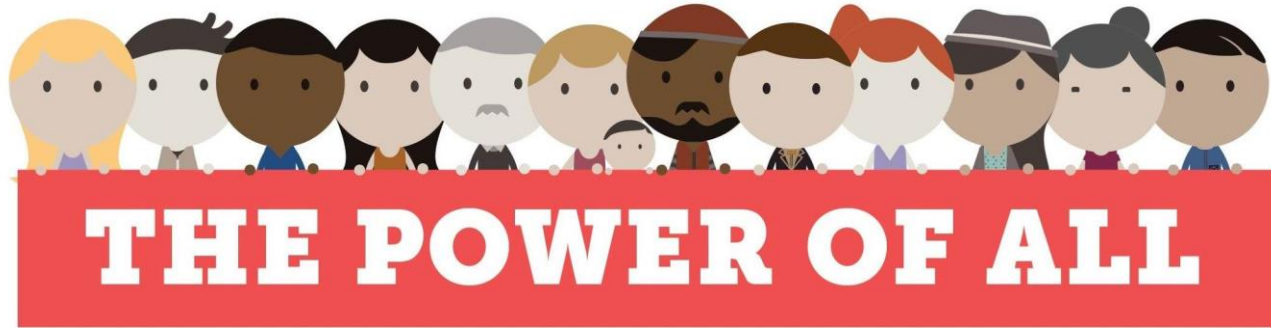
That’s part of the problem – it can be very hard to tell if a teen is vaping. Not only do manufacturers make discreet devices that resemble flash drives, highlighters and more, but vaping also does not have the same strong odor of smoking that is often a giveaway for parents and teachers. Vaping is so easily concealed, in fact, that [students vape during class](#).

Some signs your teen is vaping might include:

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<sup>5</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. E-cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General [PDF – 8.47MB]. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2016.

<sup>6</sup> E-cigarette use as a predictor of cigarette smoking: results from a 1-year follow-up of a national sample of 12th grade students. Retrieved from <http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2017/01/04/tobaccocontrol-2016-053291?paperoc>



- Their room smells artificially sweet. Lots of vapes come in candy flavors.
- They are drinking a lot of liquids. Vaping can dry out your child’s mouth, making them thirsty.
- They get nosebleeds. One side effect of vaping can be nosebleeds from dried out nasal passages.
- They pass on caffeine. After vaping with nicotine, some users develop a sensitivity to caffeine, even when they enjoyed it before.

Regardless of whether you think your child is vaping, it’s important to continue having open and honest conversations to see what they know and think about vaping.

### What should parents/guardians and trusted adults do?

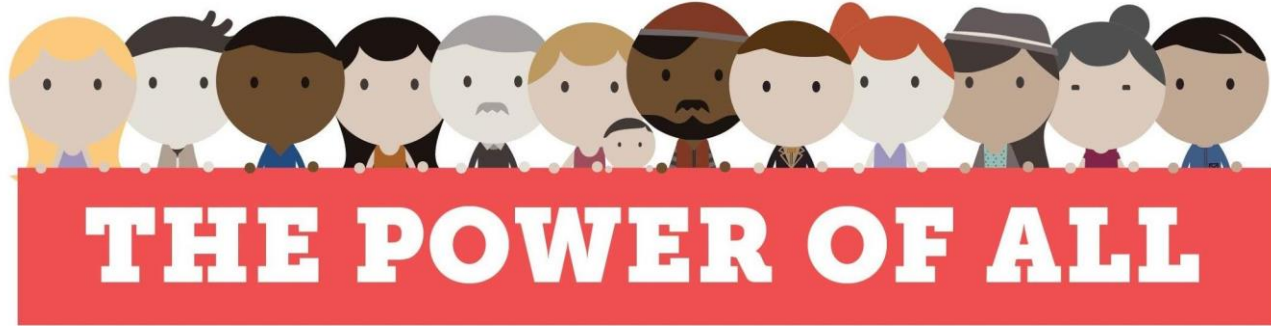
Parents/guardians and trusted adults play an influential role in preventing youth tobacco use. Having a strong relationship with a trusted adult is a protective factor against all youth substance use, including tobacco use. For example, the latest Healthy Kids Colorado Survey [data show](#) that youth who can ask their parents for help with a personal problem are less likely to vape than those who cannot. It also shows that youth with clear family rules are less likely to vape. For more information about building strong connections with youth, visit [ForwardTogetherCO.com](http://ForwardTogetherCO.com).

In addition to building stronger relationships, parents/guardians and trusted adults should educate themselves about vaping – what it is, what the risks are and how they should talk to their kids about it. Resources to educate parents and provide tips on talking to youth can be found on the Tobacco Free Colorado website at: <https://www.tobaccofreeco.org/know-the-facts/>.

Communities across Colorado are organizing to reduce the toll of tobacco. Look for ways to get involved in your community to protect youth from the tobacco industry.

### What should parents/guardians know about vaping in Colorado?

Here are the main things Colorado parents/guardians and other trusted adults should know about vaping:



- 1) **Too many young people are vaping.** One in four Colorado youth are vaping; 45.9% of high school students admitted to experimenting with vaping and 25.9% said they vaped within the last month, according to 2019 statewide Healthy Kids Colorado Survey results.
- 2) **More kids see vaping as risky.** While 2019 youth vaping rates hadn't changed significantly from 2017, the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey found that [more teens see it as risky](#); 73% of youth think vaping is risky, an increase from 50% in 2017. A higher perception of risk can lead to lower use in the future.
- 3) There were **significant increases in the percent of high school students who thought breathing secondhand vapor was risky.** In 2019, 55% of high schoolers thought breathing secondhand vapor was risky, up from 40.9% in 2017.
- 4) **More than half of Colorado youth who report vaping are trying to quit.** The Colorado Quitline is a resource for Colorado youth as young as 12 and provides free coaching to stop or reduce vaping, smoking or chewing.
- 5) **Vaping is a predictor of future smoking.** A study of 12th grade students who had never smoked a cigarette found that those who had recently vaped were more than four (4.78) times more likely to start smoking in the next year. Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.
- 6) **Vaping raises the risk to kids of COVID-19.** [Research](#) found that teenagers who vape had a much higher risk for COVID-19.
- 7) **Vaping can harm growing brains.** Nicotine, the addictive ingredient in cigarettes, is also in most vape products. The chemical has a negative impact on adolescent brain development, causing lasting cognitive and behavioral impairments, including effects on working memory and attention.

## How do you think COVID-19 and stress from changes to school and family situations will impact youth tobacco use?

We know there is a strong relationship between youth tobacco use and mental health, including depression, anxiety and stress. We also know that COVID-19 is affecting the health and wellbeing of Colorado youth, which is why it's more important than ever that we work to ensure that Colorado youth



have the resources they need to create healthy coping habits and avoid substance use.

## Are there resources available to help parents /guardians and adults who work with youth?

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has a number of free materials to help adults talk about vaping with teens. They are available at: [TobaccoFreeCO.org/know-the-facts/](https://TobaccoFreeCO.org/know-the-facts/).

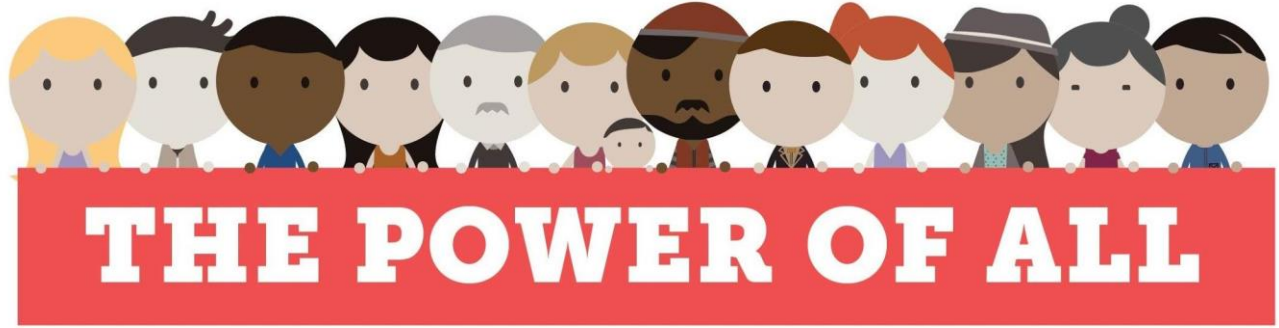
Materials include:

- [Frequently Asked Questions for Parents and Adults Who Work with Youth](#)
- [Tip Sheet: Talking to Youth](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Myths vs. Facts](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Vaping 101](#)

## Local Questions

Below we present some possible questions a reporter may ask about your community specifically that you should be prepared to answer. These include:

- What do the 2019 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey results say about vaping and tobacco use in your region? Are you encouraged by this data? Discouraged?
  - Use this as an opportunity to talk about the successes you've seen in your community. Connect successes to local policy initiatives, when possible. Use discouraging data as an opportunity to talk about the steps that are currently being taken or can be taken to reduce youth tobacco use locally and why that's so important.
    - For example, if you are a community that passed an early tobacco retail license measure and you are already seeing the positive effects on youth use in your area, highlight that! If you passed a tobacco retail license measure after the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey responses were gathered in 2019 you can hypothesize that you will see the positive results of this policy in the next survey. If your community is not considering a tobacco retail license measure,



use data to show why it's needed. (Learn more about why local licensing is still important [here.](#))

- Eagle River Valley is an example you might highlight. In 2017, it was one of the regions with the highest youth vape rates in Colorado (and the nation). By November 2019, almost every municipality within Eagle County and the county itself had a retail licensing in place. 2019 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey data showed that youth vaping declined significantly from a 36% current vaping to 29%. Underage youth who attempted to buy a tobacco product were more likely to report they were refused a purchase compared with the rest of the state. In this region, more than 62% of those currently vaping tried to quit in the last year.
- What current steps are being taken to reduce youth vaping in your area? Do you feel you're making progress? What policy initiatives are currently being considered in your area?
  - Highlight where your community is in the tobacco retail licensing process and the effects you have seen or expect to see as a result. See talking points above. Be prepared to talk about why your community still needs a tobacco retail licensing (if applicable). (Learn more about why local licensing is still important [here.](#))
  - Talk about the importance of flavor bans and advertising restrictions as priorities in your community and how these restrictions can be incorporated into local tobacco retail licensing.
    - Three out of four Colorado high schoolers reported seeing electronic vapor product ads in the past month. Research [shows](#) that youth who are exposed to e-cigarette ads in stores are twice as likely to start vaping.
    - 18% of youth report using e-cigarettes because they're flavored. Without a state or federal policy, local policy can ban or restrict the sale of flavored products that get kids hooked.
  - Use this as an opportunity to remind parents/community members that they play an important role in reducing youth tobacco use. Highlight the ways they can get involved at the local level. Be as specific as possible.