

Vaping Toolkit for Schools

The purpose of this document is to provide tools and resources to school district staff and others who are working to address the use of nicotine vapour products among youth. Key audiences that can utilize the toolkit include superintendents, principals, teachers, health promoting school coordinators and public health nurses.

The Legal Substances Team can assist with resources, consultation and staff training to address tobacco and vapour product use at your school.

For more information, contact the Legal Substances Team at
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Vaping and Youth

Background

Vapour products, also referred to as vapes, e-cigarettes or electronic nicotine delivery devices (ENDS) emerged onto the Canadian market in 2009. Since 2017, new generations of small, cartridge or “pod” type devices and disposable devices entered the market creating a new rise in popularity. Promoted as discreet, compact, sleek and modern, these products have a high appeal to young people.

In BC, all vapour products must contain either nicotine or cannabis. The former is a highly addictive substance, also found in cigarettes. Nicotine has a long-lasting harmful effect on the developing adolescent brain impacting attention, learning, mood and impulse control. Moreover, nicotine use is associated with an increased risk to developing addiction to other substances.

Although vapour products are promoted as a less harmful alternative for those who want to quit smoking, they are not harmless, particularly for youth and non-smokers. As vaping exposes people to nicotine, various chemical compounds, irritants and carcinogens, it may lead to respiratory irritation, nicotine toxicity, and pulmonary and cardiovascular disease. Recent evidence supports that even exposure to second-hand vapour aerosol can lead to respiratory issues for by-standers. Malfunctioning devices have also caused injuries like burns. Further, are concerns that vaping amongst youth may increase the chances of progressing to smoking, or to using both cigarettes and vapour products (dual-use). The Canadian Paediatric Society cautions against using vaping as a smoking cessation or harm reduction strategy for youth, as there is evidence of harm while no reliable evidence of effectiveness for this age group exists.

Statistics

Recent surveys identified that vaping rates among school aged youth in the Interior Region is higher than the provincial average (33% vs. 27%)¹. To learn more about the latest statistical information on youth vaping in Canada and BC, you can also consult:

- [Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey](#) | Health Canada
- [Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey \(CTNS\)](#) | Health Canada
- [Survey and Reports on BC youth](#) | McCreary Centre Society

¹ Smith, A., Peled, M., Poon, C., Jones, G., Mahdal, D., & McCreary Centre Society. (2020). *Understanding tobacco use and vaping among BC youth: Findings from the BC Adolescent Health Survey*. McCreary Centre Society.

Schools and Vaping Prevention

Best Practice for Schools

Addressing student use of vapour products requires a multi-pronged approach in alignment with the Comprehensive School Health Framework and evidence-based substance-related harms prevention. Learn more about how schools can do that through the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Blueprint for Action: Preventing substance-related harms among youth through a Comprehensive School Health approach](#) and this [brief summary](#). The general recommendations that follows are aligned with this resource and other substance use and vaping specific evidence-based prevention resources, however educators are encouraged to analyse their school communities' particular needs for a tailored approach. Your regional Legal Substances Coordinator can support this work.

Information for Superintendents and School Administrators



Here's what you can do

1. Address Student Vapour Use:

- ☐ [Create or review and strengthen](#) existing smoke and vapour free policies and code of conduct. Make sure they meet or exceed the [provincial legislation](#). Ensure your school follows [best practices for substance-related harms prevention](#) and treat tobacco and vapour products the same as all other substances (drugs and alcohol). You can find some policy examples [here](#).
- ☐ Favour educational and supportive approaches rather than punitive ones, for example implementing an [alternative to suspension program](#) for vaping incidents.
- ☐ [Respect the traditional use of tobacco](#) by allowing ceremonial tobacco in schools and promoting education about the sacred nature of tobacco to some indigenous communities. You can find some policy examples [here](#).
- ☐ Substance use prevention starts with things unrelated to substances. Foster a school environment that is [welcoming](#) and [promotes well-being](#).
- ☐ [Engage students](#) and recruit student voices to create effective policies, programs and a positive environment.
- ☐ Stress and mental health problems are associated the use of substances. Aim to promote mental health and build social-emotional and executive functioning skills to empower students to better manage challenges and reduce the harms from vaping. Learn more about [Mental Health Promotion in schools](#) and [Effective Programming for positive youth development](#).
- ☐ Ensure students are aware of the policies by providing regular reminders.
- ☐ Ensure smoke-free signs are visible on school property and that signage includes vaping. Add [signage](#) in areas where students congregate. Check if your local municipality have a smoke-free bylaw and if it specifies any requirements for schools.
- ☐ Designate staff to conduct regular walkabouts to maintain a visible presence and increase awareness and compliance.

- ☐ Make information about quitting support available to all students. See number 4.

2. Inform Staff:

- ☐ Provide training and reminders about the school policy on tobacco and vapour products so that everyone knows the rules and their roles.
- ☐ Help teachers stay informed about vaping. Share the [BC Lung Vaping Handout for Teachers](#) with your staff.
- ☐ Reduce stigma and help teachers promote open and non-judgemental [dialogue in the classroom](#) about tobacco, vaping and other substances.
- ☐ Subscribe to the [Health Promoting School Newsletter](#), which includes up-to-date information on vaping under the “Tobacco and Vapour Products” section.

3. Educate Parents:

- ☐ Send an annual (or more regular) newsletter/email home that talks about your school's policy and student expectations, such as this [SD 23 Letter to Parents](#).
- ☐ Parents/guardians play an important role in talking with their children. Share [BC Lung Foundation](#), [Health Canada](#), and [Interior Health](#) resources on your district website and through your communication channels with parents.
- ☐ Work with community partners to host a public awareness event on vaping. Grants might be available to support health-promoting initiatives.

4. Support Cessation:

- ☐ Nicotine is addictive and it can be hard to stop. Inform students and staff about free support through [QuitNow](#) and the [Quash App](#). The [B.C. Smoking Cessation Program](#) also offers free quit aids (patch, gum or lozenges) at local pharmacies.
- ☐ Students who identify as Indigenous are eligible for [supplementary coverage](#) of cessation quit aids beyond the B.C. Smoking Cessation Program. Additional culturally appropriate resources and cessation information can be found through [Talk Tobacco](#) or [FNHA resources](#).
- ☐ Some students may not be ready to quit but could still benefit from support to reduce the harms of smoking or vaping. Having a non-judgemental approach, maintaining a positive relationship, focusing on the person and not on their behavior and meeting them where they are at in their readiness to change are helpful in supporting students who are impacted by substance use.
- ☐ Vaping for cessation or harm reduction is not recommended for this age group.
- ☐ Connect with community partners to inquire about local services and supports for youth.
- ☐ Explore the possibility of providing cessation counselling in your district or community. More information available on the [Tobacco & Vaping Resources for Schools](#) or through the Legal Substances team.

Information for Teachers and Health Educators



Here's what you can do

1. Educate Yourself:

- ☐ Stay updated about vaping. Check out [BC Lung Vaping Handout for Teachers](#), [Health Canada Talking with teens about vaping: Tip sheet](#) and the [Stanford Medicine E-Cigarette and Vape Pen Module](#).
- ☐ For a short introduction about vaping, watch this [video](#) from the UCLA School of Medicine.
- ☐ The use of nicotine products should be treated like other substances. Learn more about [substance use](#) and [how schools can help protect youth from substance-related harms](#).
- ☐ Improve your [dialogue facilitation](#) skills to encourage reflection and support the development of decision-making skills through open classroom discussions.
- ☐ [Health Canada](#) provides comprehensive information and resources about youth and vaping.
- ☐ Learn about the traditional and ceremonial use of tobacco through [Respecting Tobacco by FNHA](#).
- ☐ Subscribe to the [Health Promoting School Newsletters](#) which include up to date information on vaping under the "Tobacco and Vapour Products" heading.
- ☐ Consult the [Tobacco & Vaping Resources for Schools](#) for more information, lesson plans and resources for educators and youth

2. Educate Students:

- ☐ Classroom resources and presentations are available through the [BC Lung Foundation](#), [Stanford Medicine](#), the [Centre for Disease Control](#), [Scholastic](#), [iMinds](#) and [CATCH MY BREATH](#) (*has a cost associated*).
- ☐ Health Canada has a National awareness campaign called "[Consider the Consequences](#)", which provides information on the risks of vaping and youth. You can find more resources and activities [here](#).
- ☐ The Federal Drug Administration runs a similar awareness campaign called "[The Real Cost](#)" with prevention [videos](#).
- ☐ [Youth Now](#) has a compilation of educator resources including materials from Scholastic. Check out the interactive learning games!
- ☐ The WHO collaborated with Kahoot to bring the [Tobacco Exposed](#) game to classrooms.
- ☐ Include tobacco and vaping in your media literacy teachings with resources from [Media Smarts](#).
- ☐ Explore the differences between commercial tobacco and vaping and the Traditional and Ceremonial Use of Tobacco through [FNHA resources](#) and receive culturally appropriate support and cessation information through [Talk Tobacco](#).

- ☐ Increase awareness of the impacts of tobacco and vaping on your environmental and climate change using information from the [WHO](#), [Truth Initiative](#), [UC Davis](#), [UNDO](#) and [Expose Tobacco](#) websites.
- ☐ Encourage students to get involved in advocacy with the [Lung Health Foundation - Get involved](#) Modules.
- ☐ Share trusted resources where they can learn about and access support for their mental health, substance use and tobacco and vaping, such as the [IH Tobacco & Vaping Information for Teens](#), [Foundry BC](#), [QuitNow](#) and [Quash](#) webpages.
- ☐ Community partners may offer grants for educational activities that relate to tobacco and vaping. Funding and programs sponsored by the tobacco and vaping industry; however, are not recommended. [Here is why](#).

School Compliance

Under the [Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act](#) (TVPCA), tobacco and vapour products are prohibited for use in and on school grounds. See [section 2.2](#) of the Act for details. Below is a checklist of recommended strategies to help you encourage and maintain compliance at your school or district.

School Compliance Checklist	
How many of the below strategies has your school implemented?	✓
Updated school policies and code of conduct.	
Visible smoke and vape-free signage present.	
Identify problem areas.	
Student/classroom vaping resources.	
Parent/Guardian resources.	
Staff training and vaping awareness resources.	
Explore available grants.	
Host a vapour awareness event for parents/students/community.	
Provide support to quit.	


Additional Resources

- [Tobacco & Vapour Resources for Schools](#)
- [Tobacco & Vapour Information for Teens](#)
- [School Compliance Information](#)
- [Vaping and Youth Factsheet](#)
- [Vapour Products in and on School Property](#)
- [Take a Breath Contest: Teen Voices on Tobacco, Cannabis & Vaping](#)

Appendix 1 – Policy Review Checklist

Policy Review Considerations	Yes/No
Meets minimum provincial standard – Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act .	
Your school follows best practices for substance-related harms prevention and treats <i>all</i> substances in the same manner: alcohol, tobacco, vaping, cannabis, and other drugs.	
Definition of smoking and vaping includes: to inhale, exhale, burn, or carry a lighted cigarette, cigar, pipe, hookah, activated electronic cigarette or other lighted or heated smoking equipment that burns or vaporizes tobacco, e-substances or cannabis.	
Creates smoke and vapour free areas specified by signage: entrances, washrooms, school property, and other identified areas.	
Prohibits vaping on school grounds, vehicles, school-related events and field trips.	
Establishes preventative actions, evidence-based education and supportive measures for youth that uses tobacco and vapour products.	
Clearly states educational, supportive and restorative measures and avoid using punitive disciplinary actions for non-compliance.	

Appendix 2 – Signage and Print Resources

Signage		
Name	Document	Access link for download
BC Ministry of Health Vaping laws: What you need to know		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster Credit: BC Ministry of Health
BC Ministry of Health Smoke/Vape-Free Grounds <i>(sign example)</i>		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster Credit: BC Ministry of Health
BC Lung Foundation Vaping: An overview		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster Find additional youth vaping education resources here Credit: BC Lung Foundation
Government of Canada Vaping can cause lung damage		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster Find additional youth vaping prevention resources here Credit: Government of Canada

Appendix 3 – Take a Breath Contest: Teen Voices on Tobacco, Cannabis & Vaping

2023 Poster Contest Winners		
Theme category	Poster	Access link for download
Important facts about smoking tobacco, cannabis and/or vaping products		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster
Tobacco and vaping companies' strategies to promote use		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster
Impact of smoking tobacco or cannabis and/or vaping on my life		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster
Environmental impact of smoking/tobacco and vaping		Click here to download a printable copy of this poster

The importance of ceremonial tobacco for Indigenous traditions, and how it differs from everyday (*commercial*) tobacco use



Click [here](#) to download a printable copy of this poster

View and print the 2022 Poster Contest Winners by clicking [here](#).

For more information on this contest and future participation details, please visit:
<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/information-for/teens/take-a-breath-contest>.

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