

# Controlling the Vaping Epidemic in Your City or Town

## Community Protection Guide for Local Boards of Health

**Vaping Epidemic in Massachusetts:** According to the latest data from the Center for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, over 20% of Massachusetts high school students currently use an electronic vape product. By senior year, 25% are current users. Some adolescents use them during school hours because they need a 'hit' to get through the day.

**Nicotine Addiction:** The adolescent brain is uniquely sensitive to nicotine and can become addicted more rapidly, more strongly, and at lower exposure concentrations. Teens who vape are at least 4 times more likely to begin using traditional tobacco products.

**Other Health Risks:** In addition to chemicals causing asthma and eosinophilic pneumonitis, JUUL and other electronic vape products contain group 1 carcinogens such as N-Nitrosornicotine that have been proven to cause cancer.

**Marketing to Kids:** Tobacco companies know that if adolescents begin using their sweet candy and fruit flavored products before the age of 21, it's much more likely they'll have a lifelong customer – in fact, 95% of adult tobacco users started before age 21.

## Protect your community by presenting these ideas to your Board of Health

1. Make sure the board of health in your town or city strictly enforces the new tobacco 21 law, checking compliance 4 times per year, per retailer. For adolescents, local retailers are the number one source, and a single retail store can supply an entire high school with product, potentially addicting hundreds of kids. It is never okay to push nicotine on kids to turn a profit.
2. Report any store that sells tobacco products to teens under the age of 21 to the Attorney General's office: 617-727-8400
3. Encourage your board of health to increase fines for selling to those under 21 to \$1000 for the first offense, \$2000 for the second offense and \$3000 for the third offense. Second and third offenses should include revocation of a store's retail license to sell tobacco for increasing periods of time. The Massachusetts Driver's License orientation changes at age 21 from vertical to horizontal so there should never be any confusion about a customer's age.
4. Urge your board of health to join with 120 Massachusetts cities and towns who have already made flavored tobacco products ONLY legal in tobacco stores for those 21 and older. That single regulation is saving hundreds of kids from tobacco addiction in those towns—talk to your local board of health and urge them to move flavors (including mint and menthol) to smoke shops only.

**Sources:** 1. YRBSS 2017 2. *E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2016, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (website on Electronic Cigarettes [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm)) 3. *Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes a Report of the National Academies of Sciences* 2018. 4. *Maximizing the Impact of Tobacco 21 Laws in the United States*, Winickoff et al. *AJPH* 2018.

The Newton-Wellesley Collaborative for  
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