

SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE TOBACCO-FREE BY IMPLEMENTING 100% TOBACCO-FREE SCHOOL POLICIES

POLICY STAKEHOLDERS K-12 SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of death and disease in this country with over 443,000 deaths per year. Currently nearly 9 out of 10 smokers started by age 18, among those youth who persist in smoking, a third will die prematurely. Addressing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke by adopting tobacco-free campus policies is a proven strategy to reduce initiation by young people, increase the number of tobacco users who quit, reduce the prevalence of tobacco use and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.

ADDRESSING TOBACCO IN THIS ENVIRONMENT

- Youth are sensitive to nicotine and can feel dependent earlier than adults. As a result, 3 out of 4 teen smokers will smoke as adults.
- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which causes addiction, may harm brain development, and could lead to continued tobacco product use among youth.
- Youth are vulnerable to social and environmental influences to use tobacco; messages and images that make tobacco use appealing to them are everywhere. School policies and interventions that encourage tobacco-free environments and lifestyles and reduce tobacco advertising, promotions, and availability of tobacco product are proven to reduce youth tobacco use.
- Schools are role models for student well-being in the community. Actively promoting tobacco-free living through policies and procedures makes a strong statement and supports students to remain tobacco-free.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Assess current policy and review against Maine state law and model school policy language.
2. Form an advisory committee to recommend changes to the policy.
3. Draft revisions to the policy and procedures.
4. Present revisions and rationale to the school board for approval.
5. Plan implementation and enforcement strategies.
6. Educate students, staff and parents about the policy.
7. Implement the tobacco-free policy.
8. Maintain the policy and evaluate efforts annually.

WHAT IS A MODEL POLICY?

A tiered policy system has been developed of school model policy criteria to support schools the opportunity to make adjustments to their policy in stages if there is not capacity to move directly to the highest level. The Good, Better, and Best tiers address tobacco use, exposure, enforcement, education, and advertising restrictions based on best practice strategies for addressing tobacco use and dependence. Additional information is available through the 2017 Tobacco-Free School Policy Toolkit.

RESOURCES

- Local District Tobacco Prevention Partner – usually located at a local Community Coalition, the DTPP can provide technical assistance on policy adoption and implementation and provide tips on creating tobacco-free environments.
- 2017 Tobacco-Free School Policy Toolkit which includes a policy templates, rationale for school policies and steps for change.
- Tobacco-free signage is available for schools that meet model policy and can be accessed through local District Tobacco Prevention Partners.