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MDHHS releases Tobacco-Free report card for Michigan K-12 schools

LANSING, Mich. -- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Tobacco Section has released the 2023 [Tobacco-Free Report Card: Michigan K-12 Public School Districts](#), which reports on the current state of tobacco-free policies in public school districts across the state.

“According to the report, nearly one third of Michigan high school students have used e-cigarettes, and 14% report current use,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, MDHHS chief medical executive. “More than 80% of youth who have used a tobacco product started with a flavored product. E-cigarettes are detrimental to the health of our young Michigan residents, and these products can be highly addictive and can contain a variety of toxic chemicals and heavy metals. Using these products can permanently damage a developing adolescent brain and tobacco-free policies are an important step to prevent youth vaping and promote youth smoking cessation.”

Of Michigan K-12 public school districts, 87% fell into the strongest category of tobacco-free school policy as of March 2023. This is a 240% increase since 2014 and each policy was categorized based on their comprehensiveness, however, 44% of counties in Michigan still have at least one school district without a comprehensive tobacco-free school policy.

Comprehensive tobacco-free school policies prohibit use of any and all tobacco and non-cessation nicotine products, including e-cigarettes, by everyone at all times on school grounds and at school-sponsored off-grounds events. The report card does not assess whether schools use alternatives to suspension and other evidence-based enforcement models, but it’s important to note that these kinds of programs are an important factor in implementing an effective policy.

Evidence-based enforcement includes tobacco and vaping prevention education and cessation resources and avoiding the use of suspension, exclusion from extracurricular school activities and referrals to law enforcement. Research indicates that punitive measures may actually increase tobacco and e-cigarette use, cause students to distance themselves from their education, exclude students from tobacco/vape-free environments that are safe and adult-supervised and increase early interactions with the criminal justice system.

The MDHHS Tobacco Section is available to provide training and technical assistance to support Michigan schools with tobacco-free school policies and model codes of conduct for incorporating alternatives to suspension. To request assistance, email MDHHS-TobaccoSection@michigan.gov.

MDHHS also offers access to programs that help Michiganders quit tobacco. [My Life, My Quit](#) is free and confidential text and online program for youth under 18 years old to quit smoking or vaping. Text “Start My Quit” to 36072 to get started. Adults 18 years and older who need help quitting can contact the [MI Tobacco Quitlink](#) at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) – available 24/7.

Additional tobacco-free school and cessation resources can be found at Michigan.gov/Tobacco.

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