

## Alaska Tobacco Facts: E-cigarette use, suspension, and academic outcomes among Alaska high school students



# 1800+ DAYS LOST

781 Alaska students were suspended for tobacco use and lost more than 1800 days of school in 2018-2019

The number of Alaska high school students who smoke combustible cigarettes has decreased over time and many lives have been saved, but there is still work to do.

### 1 in 4 Alaska High School Kids Vape



Data Source: Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2019

E-cigarette use, also called vaping, is increasing among high school students.<sup>1</sup> In Alaska, 1 out of 4 teens used e-cigarettes during the past 30 days.<sup>2</sup> Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addicting and harms brain development.<sup>3</sup> E-cigarette vapor also contains cancer-causing chemicals and heavy metals.<sup>3</sup>

### Improving School Policies for Tobacco and E-cigarette Use

Schools typically use in- and out-of-school suspension penalties to help maintain safety standards. In Alaska, there were 781 total school suspensions for tobacco product use, including e-cigarettes, in 2018-2019.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence suggests schools that use harsher punishments may reduce graduation rates for all students in their schools. Research shows there are no short- or long-term academic benefits for the entire student body by removing disruptive students, including those who were suspended for tobacco or e-cigarette use.<sup>6</sup>

#### Types of e-cigarette devices

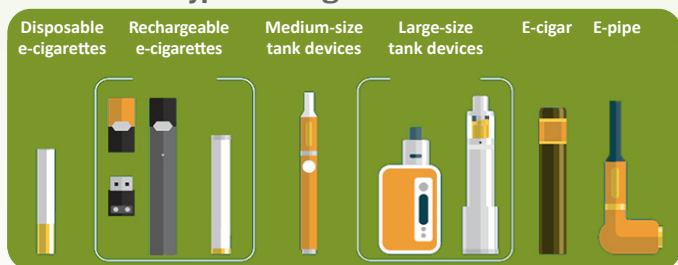


Image from CDC: [Electronic Cigarettes, What's the Bottom Line?](#)

### The potential negative impacts of suspension on students

#### Increased chance of:

- ◉ early tobacco and other substance use,
- ◉ dropping out of school,
- ◉ disruptive behavior, like lying and theft,
- ◉ poor academic achievement, and
- ◉ arrest and incarceration<sup>7,8,9</sup>

### Students at schools with higher suspension rates:



- ◉ are less likely to attend four-year colleges

- ◉ are more likely to be arrested as adults<sup>9</sup>



## What Can Schools Do?

### Consider alternatives to suspension programs for tobacco.

Alternative programs, like the ones listed under resources (on the back), may encourage youth to continue learning in school while quitting tobacco and e-cigarette products.<sup>10</sup>

### Use proven strategies.

Principals should consider alternative strategies proven to reduce tobacco and e-cigarette use in schools, (on the back).

### Engage parents and the community.

Engage parents, school staff and students in discussions about safe and supportive discipline practices.

### Invest in support staff.

Counselors, social workers, and mental health resources provided in school can enhance students' emotional well-being and improve overall academic performance.<sup>11,12,13</sup>


### Know the data.

- ◉ Collect school discipline data.
- ◉ Use [Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) and the [Alaska School Health Profiles Trend Reports](#).
- ◉ Monitor schools and districts that are implementing alternative practices to track effects on high school students.

## Resources

### School administration, teachers, and staff:


#### Training Resources

- **E-Cigarette Use Among Alaska Teens.** This course provides accurate messages about the health harms associated with youth use of e-cigarettes and shows how to prevent e-cigarette use during school or on school grounds. To enroll, sign up for a free e-Learning account, or log in to your account on the [Alaska Department of Education and Early Development website](https://dhss.alaska.gov/education/early-development/). 
- **Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska.** This framework was developed for schools in Alaska to integrate trauma-informed practices into schools to support students. This resource can be used by school and community teams to improve places of learning.
- **Not Buying It.** This Alaska public education campaign shares messages about the real consequences of tobacco and e-cigarette products, videos, resources, and tips and strategies to quit. This campaign is designed for Alaska teens but includes resources for educators and community partners.



#### Alternatives-to-Suspension Programs for Schools

- **INDEPTH.** The American Lung Association's Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health (INDEPTH) is an alternative for students who face suspension for violation of school tobacco, vaping, or nicotine use policies. Facilitator training is provided at no cost.
- **Healthy Futures.** Stanford Medicine's Tobacco Prevention toolkit offers 1-, 2-, and 4-hour Healthy Futures curriculum for free as an alternative model.

### To share with parents:

- **The Live Vape Free program** This online resource is for parents and other adults concerned about teen use of e-cigarettes. Live Vape Free provides personalized support, tips, and resources to start conversations with teens about vaping. 

### To share with students:

- **Live Vape Free Teen Texting Program** (For teens ages 13–17). **Text VAPEFREE to 873373** to join an interactive texting program that helps teens learn about vaping and get support to quit. The texts include facts, inspiration, videos, quizzes, activities, and texting with a quit coach. 
- **Not Buying It.** Students can visit this teen focused campaign for more resources. 



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**AK LIVE VAPE FREE**  
text **VAPEFREE** to **873373**

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