



Showcasing Solutions CENTRAL WISCONSIN WORKS TO PREVENT VAPING

The Problem

Vaping is touching the lives of students across the state. A third of Wisconsin high school students (34%) have tried vaping, and those who vape on a daily basis has more than doubled.

Nicotine remains one of the most accessible and highly addictive substances available. Vaping devices are continually changing and being delivered in different ways. Nearly all vapes feature enticing flavors, and nearly all youth who vape use flavored products like fruit, candy, and mint. Teens get hooked and, once addicted, struggle to quit. Among Wisconsin teens who vape, 84% want to or tried to quit.

The Solution

The problem is complex, and there isn't one easy solution. However, there are a number of multicomponent interventions that are working, and Central Wisconsin provides a great example.

The Nicotine Prevention Alliance (NPA) of Central Wisconsin brings together Marathon, Wood, and Portage Counties to promote nicotine free living. The NPA is tackling the problem of youth vaping on three fronts: 1) School district policy changes, 2) Youth Voices Project, and 3) Building trust and knowledge with youth.

Results

School District Policy

The NPA has worked to establish intervention programs to replace punishment (typically suspension or citation) for students violating school nicotine policies. Alternatives to suspension and citation programs focus on keeping kids in the classroom while addressing their addiction. Such alternatives include teen court, vaping diversion programs, and SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment), among others.

"You can't 'cite' a student out of addiction," said Courtney Tvedten, Marathon County Health Department and NPA Coordinator. "One middle school in our area initiated a teen court while another district utilizes its resource officer to implement prevention programming and educational support." Across Central Wisconsin 15 schools in six school districts have adopted alternatives to suspension and citation practices.

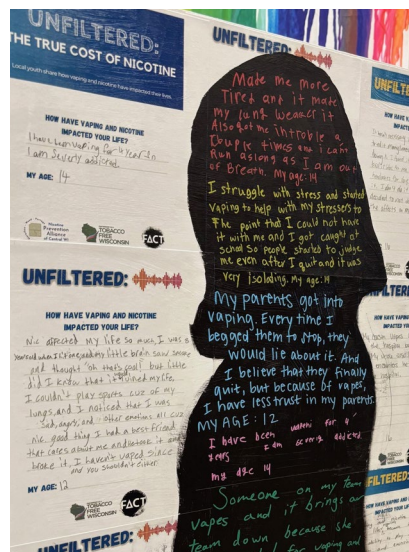
Youth Voices Project

Across the state youth were invited to share how vaping and nicotine have impacted their lives. In Central Wisconsin, 800 stories were collected from youth ages 12-18 and assembled

into a booklet – "Unfiltered: Youth Voices Impacted by Nicotine." Students revealed how vaping has impacted their health, friendships, and school life. The stories inspired an art display created in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of the Wausau Area and a community artist. "The project has opened a conversation about vaping with more youth, and, as a result, they don't feel so alone," said Tvedten.

Building Trust

Engaging youth is a key to effective prevention work. Towards that end Tvedten has been working with the Boys & Girls Club of the Wausau Area to build trust with their youth. There she started a new group where the youth direct their work. "I had no agenda. I just shared with the youth what I do and meet with them," she said.



Artwork created from Central Wisconsin youth quotes shared in the Youth Voices Project.

The youth decide what they want to work on. "Their projects have been great," Tvedten said. "They've created stickers on vaping prevention and talked about healthy behaviors. Because the messaging was created by them, it will resonate with their peers."