

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



2700+ DAYS LOST

987 Alaska students were suspended for tobacco use and lost more than 2700 days of school in 2023-2024

1 in 6 Alaska High School Kids Vape



Data Source: Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2023

E-cigarette use, also called vaping, has decreased among high school students since 2019.¹ In Alaska, 1 out of 6 teens used e-cigarettes during the past 30 days.² Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addicting and harms brain development.³ E-cigarette vapor also contains cancer-causing chemicals and heavy metals.³

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 987 total school suspensions for tobacco product use, including e-cigarettes, in 2023-2024.⁴

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.^{5,6}

Types of e-cigarette devices



Image from CDC Smoking and Tobacco Use, E-cigarettes topic web page: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/about.html>

The potential negative impacts of suspension on students

Increased chance of:

- ⌚ early tobacco and other substance use,
- ⌚ dropping out of school,⁶
- ⌚ disruptive behavior, like lying and theft,
- ⌚ poor academic achievement, and
- ⌚ arrest and incarceration^{7,8,9}

Students at schools with higher suspension rates:



- ⌚ are less likely to attend four-year colleges



- ⌚ are more likely to be arrested as adults⁹



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.¹⁰

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.^{11,12,13}

Know the data.

- ⌚ Collect school discipline data.
- ⌚ Use [Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) and the Alaska School Health Profiles Trend Reports ([available by request](#)).
- ⌚ 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](#).
- **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 and follow this teen focused campaign on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more resources.



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