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TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA WEEK URGES COMMUNITY ACTION TO FIGHT YOUTH E- CIGARETTE EPIDEMIC



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TALLAHASSEE, FLA. – The Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida is launching a new statewide initiative during the annual Tobacco Free Florida Week, taking place May 4 – 10, 2020. The theme, ***Epidemic to Action***, aims to encourage communities to mobilize from Epidemic to Action. Although the increase in youth e-cigarette use rates has slowed, 25.6% of Florida high schoolers and 9.1% of Florida middle schoolers are still using e-cigarettes.¹

The past year has seen considerable progress in tobacco control and e-cigarette regulation on the state and federal levels. For example, the federal government raised the tobacco purchasing age, including e-cigarettes, from 18 to 21. In January 2020, the FDA issued a policy which currently prohibits the sale of flavored cartridge or pod-based e-cigarettes, other than menthol and tobacco.

"We are encouraged by the considerable progress that has been made in tobacco prevention on the federal and state levels, but the stakes are still high," said State Surgeon General Scott A. Rivkees, M.D. "As new types of nicotine devices continue to enter the marketplace, we must remain vigilant to protect Florida youth from the dangers of these products. We know that e-cigarettes are not safe, especially for youth and young adults, so it is more important than ever that communities take action to protect future generations from nicotine addiction."

Nicotine is a dangerous and addictive drug. Using e-cigarettes can increase the odds of developing respiratory disease by 95%,² and teens who use nicotine may also increase the risk for future addiction to other drugs.³ Although Juul pulled most flavors and its sales are declining, new flavored disposable products, like Puff Bars, Stig and Smok are becoming more popular and are quickly filling that void. These products are not covered under the FDA's recently released flavor policy, since they are not cartridge or pod-based.

"By evolving its product design to get around FDA regulations, the e-cigarette industry is continuing to disregard the best interest of our communities," said Bureau Chief of Tobacco Free Florida Laura Corbin. "Florida's experience fighting youth tobacco use proves that community action is needed now to combat the youth e-cigarette epidemic. That's why we're encouraging Florida communities to build on recent federal and state actions to support local policies that protect youth, such as talking to retailers, working with their town council and collaborating with the local school boards."

The Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida has created tools to help communities address youth e-cigarette use and begin conversations about youth e-cigarette trends. Adults who influence youth, such as parents, teachers, coaches and superintendents should become familiar with the new, disposable products and educate youth about the dangers of these new emerging products. Tobacco Free Florida also offers free tools and services to help people quit nicotine, including e-cigarettes.

Learn more about how you can get involved at tobaccofreeflorida.com/epidemictoaction. You can also visit EndTeenVapingFL.gov for more information and free printable materials that can be provided to youth, including brochures, posters and booklets.

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About Tobacco Free Florida

The Florida Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since the program began in 2007, more than 234,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there was 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

¹ Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2019. Accessed January 28, 2020.

² Association of E-Cigarette Use With Respiratory Disease Among Adults: A Longitudinal Analysis. Bhatta, Dharma N. et al. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Volume 58, Issue 2, 182 – 190. Accessed January 28, 2020.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016. Accessed January 28, 2020.