



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA


DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Mark Johnson, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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TO: LEA Superintendents and Charter School Directors

FROM: Ellen Essick, Ph.D. Section Chief, NC Healthy Schools 

Susan Kansagra, MD, MBA, Section Chief 
N.C. Division of Public Health, Chronic Disease and Injury Section

PROHIBITING ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES ON SCHOOL CAMPUSES

We are writing to address the concern of students bringing **electronic cigarettes** (referred to as e-cigarettes) onto North Carolina public school campuses.

Since August 2008, G.S. 115C-407 has required that every North Carolina school district have a written 100% tobacco-free school policy that prohibits the use of any tobacco products on campus and at school-related events for students, staff and visitors. Under S.L. 2013-165, e-cigarettes are defined as “tobacco products”.

Therefore, e-cigarettes are covered under the current tobacco-free school policies and all e-cigarettes should be prohibited on campus and at school-related events for students, staff and visitors at all times. Local school boards also have the clear authority to amend the current local school policy to re-emphasize that e-cigarettes are prohibited on school campuses.

E-cigarette use among N.C. middle and high school students has dramatically increased since 2011. E-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive and has been shown to interfere with adolescent brain development. In addition, youth are susceptible to nicotine addiction, and those who use e-cigarettes are more likely to move on to traditional cigarettes, which, as most of us know, are destructive to human health.

JUUL is a type of e-cigarette that has become highly popular among adolescents. JUUL e-cigarettes have a few key features that are particularly concerning for youth health: **1)** they are highly addictive containing double the nicotine content of other e-cigarettes; **2)** they resemble a USB flash drive and can be easily concealed; and **3)** they come in flavors that are attractive to youth. Use of these products is commonly called “JUULing.” The popularity of JUULs has also prompted look-alike products.

[Attached is a new CDC educational resource for teachers and parents regarding the JUUL e-cigarettes.](#)

K-12 CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

NC HEALTHY SCHOOLS SECTION

6341 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6341 | (919) 807-3939 | Fax (919) 807-4046

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Unless your schools have recently replaced the existing tobacco-free school signs on your campuses, the existing signs are outdated and do not clearly communicate that all e-cigarettes are prohibited on school campuses. The existing tobacco-free school signs were purchased from Voss Signs at <http://www.vosssigns.com/products/stock/tobacco-free/>. We encourage each school district to purchase new tobacco-free school signs using the new model signage. Please find the new model tobacco-free schools sign at <http://www.nctobaccofreeschools.org/>

In addition, we recommend a new evidence-based tobacco use prevention program specific to middle and high schoolers' use of e-cigarettes entitled the CATCH My Breath™ program. The program is currently available free of charge to N.C. Schools. See the following link: <https://catchinfo.org/modules/e-cigarettes/>

For students who violate the tobacco-free schools policy, a recommended tobacco use educational program that can be used as an alternative to suspension, is ASPIRE. The is a free, bilingual, online tool that helps middle and high school teens learn about being **tobacco free. It explains the dangers of tobacco and nicotine use and it gives information and ways to quit. Students can earn a certificate of completion upon finishing the **program**. See the following link: <https://www.mdanderson.org/about-md-anderson/community-services/aspire.html>**

The 2017 NC Youth Tobacco Survey was recently administered in randomly selected schools across the state. Thank you for your participation. We should have new statewide data regarding use of any tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, among N.C. middle and high school students soon.

If you have questions or concerns please contact Jim D. Martin, M.S., Director of Policy and Programs, Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch at jim.martin@dhhs.nc.gov or 919-707-5404.