

THE BOTTOM LINE *The Truth About Vaping*

On October 28, the PSB Guidance Department hosted a presentation by Caron Treatment Center's Education Alliance that offered parents, community, and PSB staff a wealth of information and strategies regarding the troubling epidemic of vaping among Brookline youth. In response to the Center for Disease Control warning following a rise in severe lung injury from vaping (currently around 1900 cases, including 37 deaths), Gov. Baker banned all vaping sales (through Dec. 24). According to State Representative Tommy Vitolo, who attended the presentation, Brookline is considering a permanent ban on vaping products. But even with decreased access, vaping is still problematic, and many kids who had already begun vaping are now struggling to quit. It is important for parents to keep up to date with information, trends, and prevention strategies. Key takeaways from the evening included:

WHAT -- Vapes (e-cigarettes, JUULs, etc.) are devices that heat up a liquid (in a cartridge or pod) to release an aerosol when inhaled. The liquids come in a huge selection of flavors (est. 15,000) especially appealing to kids, and the devices are often very discreet (they can look like pens, highlighters, thumb drives, inhalers, lighters, even a smart watch or a key fob). Kids often get them from friends or family members, online, and during the ban, on the black market and from retailers in other states.



WHY kids use – boredom, curiosity, rebellion, peer pressure, self-medication (relaxation, avoidance of pain, to forget about problems, to sleep/wake up, etc.)

WHY we are concerned – The flavored e-liquids are high in nicotine (one pod can contain as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes), which kids don't realize until they feel signs of dependence. They also contain other *unregulated and unspecified chemicals* (from formaldehyde to caffeine to heavy metals), making these products dangerous for the developing teen brain as well as lungs, gums, teeth, etc. Also, vapes are often adapted for use with marijuana, which has dramatically more THC levels than previous generations. Some kids are making "home brews" in their basements. (for more information on marijuana, go to <https://www.b-pen.org/marijuana.html>.)

HOW much – After years of declining tobacco use among Brookline youth, vapes have led teens back to nicotine addiction in epidemic rates. (Nationally, nicotine consumption increased by 78% for MS and HS youth 2017-2018.) Students admit to vaping during the school day in bathrooms, even sneaking puffs in classes. (BHS was awarded a grant for five vape detectors, since even second and third hand smoke can be risky, and the school is hoping for the additional needed funds to install them.)

BE AWARE – Telltale signs of vaping include a sweet scent, dry mouth, nosebleeds, glassy eyes, bleeding gums, respiratory issues, and caffeine sensitivity. Keep eyes out for unfamiliar pens/flash drives. Regular use can also impact mental health and executive function, so be alert for dramatic behavioral changes.

STRATEGIES – Delaying use, education of risk (starting prevention as early as 4th grade), and promotion of resilience/positive coping skills are important. Communication and healthy role models are key -- parents are their teens' greatest influence, and known parental disapproval is very effective (but use facts, not scare tactics, and *talk with, not at*, making sure to listen). Use teachable moments. Help kids practice refusal skills. Establish clear rules and consequences. And don't be afraid to ask for help.

Brookline school initiatives include health education and special programming at the middle school level, prevention programs, cessation/counseling services – students don't get in trouble if they go to Guidance or the Prevention Team voluntarily for confidential help (Rm. 149, 617.713.5155).

For more information and links to additional material from the presentation, go to the ["VAPING"](http://www.B-PEN.org) page of www.B-PEN.org

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Additional resources:

www.caron.org, Caron Treatment Centers

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Free Digital Cessation Program <https://www.caron.org/our-programs/education-alliance/digital-learning>

State resources - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-youth-use-of-e-cigarettes-and-other-vaping-devices>

Surgeon General Tip Sheet - https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_ECig_ParentTipSheet_508.pdf

Partnership for Drug Free Kids' "How to Talk to Your Kids About Vaping" [https://www.b-pen.org/uploads/2/9/2/9/2929884/what-you-need-to-know-and-how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-vaping-guide-partnership-for-drug-free-kids_002 .pdf](https://www.b-pen.org/uploads/2/9/2/9/2929884/what-you-need-to-know-and-how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-vaping-guide-partnership-for-drug-free-kids_002.pdf)

For Parents: <http://makesmokinghistory.org/dangers-of-vaping/parents/>

Toolkit for Schools: <http://makesmokinghistory.org/dangers-of-vaping/schools/>

Cessation Resources: <http://makesmokinghistory.org/dangers-of-vaping/help-youth-quit/>

