

Guidance on **Vape Detectors** in K-12 Schools



California
Youth
Advocacy
Network

WHAT ARE VAPE DETECTORS

In an effort to address student tobacco use on campus, companies are selling devices designed to detect vaping and alert administration in real-time to a location where a student may be vaping.

Vape detectors are usually installed in bathrooms or locker rooms. The sensor device may detect aerosol (vapor) as well as noise disturbances that may indicate bullying or fighting. Once detected, a school administrator is notified.

The cost of vape detectors may range from \$300 to \$1,000. There may also be additional expenses such as installation, annual fees, and costs associated with connecting devices to the internet. Tobacco-Use Prevention Education (TUPE) funds cannot be used to purchase vape detectors.

VAPE DETECTORS AND CAMPUS CONSIDERATIONS

While vape detectors may temporarily deter youth from vaping in specific spaces on campus, there is no research or evidence that shows they reduce vaping or support youth in quitting tobacco. Instead, detectors may lead students to vaping in other spaces on school grounds. They may also create additional burdens for school staff by alerting administration of false positives and requiring maintenance of damaged equipment.

Furthermore, installation of these devices may contribute to punitive discipline rather than foster a positive school climate. Punitive measures do not support students in quitting tobacco and may create even greater harm to youth.

If a campus is experiencing students vaping on school grounds, such as in bathrooms, classrooms, or other areas of campus, there are a variety

of resources to provide you support with preventing youth initiation, educating students on dangers of tobacco use, providing brief interventions to motivate quitting, and linking students to free and easily accessible quit resources.



ALTERNATIVES TO VAPE DETECTORS

PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

The California Department of Education provides TUPE funding to all County Offices of Education to offer assistance to districts and schools to address youth tobacco use. Contact your local [County Office of Education TUPE Coordinator](#) to learn more about the support they provide.

In addition to local support, numerous evidence-informed prevention curricula are available at no cost to California schools to assist with educating students on the dangers of tobacco and marijuana use and strategies for making healthy decisions. The curricula are available for grades 3-6, 6-8, and 9-12 students. A comprehensive list of curricula is available at <https://tupeca.org/Pages/Prevention-Curriculum>.

The California Youth Advocacy Network offers downloadable prevention and education materials to educate young people on the dangers of tobacco use and link to free and easily accessible quit resources. www.cyanonline.org/materialsdownload



INTERVENTION

The vaping devices students are using today have high levels of nicotine which has led to early onset of addiction. The recent National Youth Tobacco Survey found one in four youth who report current vaping are vaping daily. This indicates regular use and dependency of nicotine and tobacco products.

While vape detectors are not recommended, if a school uses detectors to identify students who are vaping on campus, it is important students are connected with an adult staff member who can offer brief intervention. All middle and high school students who use tobacco or marijuana products benefit from connecting with a trusted adult and discussing their substance use.

Brief intervention (BI) is a structured conversation between a staff member, counselor, or nurse and a student who is using a substance (i.e., tobacco, marijuana, alcohol). The goal of brief intervention is to identify the unhealthy behavior and support youth, raise their awareness of the risks associated with substance use, elicit internal motivation for change, and support behavior-change goals.

A BI skillset is a tool many adults in school settings can benefit from, not just counselors or medical staff. BI trainings may be available through your County Office of Education TUPE Program as well as the California School-Based Health Alliance.

In addition to one-on-one intervention, schools may also utilize structured programs designed to motivate and/or support students who use tobacco in quitting. A full list of recommended programs is available at <https://tupeca.org/Pages/Intervention>.



TREATMENT

Following an intervention session, if a student is interested in quitting tobacco, staff can refer them to tobacco treatment services. The following programs are designed for youth audiences, available at no cost, and easily accessible online or through text:



Kick It California -

helps youth and adults quit smoking, vaping, and smokeless tobacco. It provides online resources, phone support, and a mobile app, promoting healthier choices to break free from addiction for a smoke-free future.



This Is Quitting -

includes an app and text program youth can use to get support in quitting vaping and use of other tobacco products. Counselors are available to provide support 24/7. Youth can be enrolled in this program by texting DITCHVAPE to 88709.



SmokeFreeTeen -

offers a text, app, and web-based program to support youth in quitting tobacco. The website includes tools youth can use on their own to build a quit plan.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Parents, guardians, and peers can play an important role in denormalizing tobacco use and supporting the overall well-being of youth. These individuals can help create safe, smoke and tobacco-free spaces and support youth in quitting tobacco and nicotine products.

[The California Department of Public Health](#) - Tobacco Prevention Program has resources for parents and guardians, youth family members and peers, and school teachers and staff to guide conversations around quitting tobacco. Each material offers advice on how to support young people who use tobacco, links to free quit services, and information about free mental health support.

The US Surgeon General has created the website, e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov, for parents and families to support open conversations with teens about tobacco and nicotine use.

POLICY

It is important for schools to be safe spaces for youth to learn and socialize with their peers. Research shows that implementing restorative practices, such as alternative to suspension programs, significantly improves student health and well-being. As a result of such practices, schools should expect to see an overall decrease in youth vaping, including vaping on campus.

[The Public Health Law Center](#) has a model policy that provides further guidance on amending existing policy to prevent youth from continuing to vape on campus while also supporting youth in attempting to quit. The policy includes recommended enforcement guidelines designed to support youth in working with an adult staff member to assess their tobacco use behavior; refer to free cessation services; and, if on campus vaping continues, connect students to educational community service opportunities.



California Youth Advocacy Network
info@cyanonline.org | (916) 339-3424 | www.cyanonline.org

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