

# SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OKALOOSA COUNTY

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
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## **OCSD Anti-Vaping Campaign to Support Secondary Students A Message from Superintendent Chambers**

The US Surgeon General declared youth vaping a national epidemic in 2018. During the 2021-2022 school year, the number of reported vaping incidents in Florida schools nearly doubled from the previous year. In Okaloosa County, where the majority of our students make good choices every day, we are not immune to this crisis as we have seen a spike in the number of students possessing, distributing, and/or using electronic cigarettes on our campuses.

Our students' health and safety are my number one priority. I appreciate your active involvement not only in your student's academic success but also in their health. When a student makes the decision to vape at school, both are impacted.

Please read on to learn more about the harmful effects vaping has on our youth, many of which you may already be aware of, as well as some of the things we are doing in our schools to address vaping. My hope is that through the launch of this district anti-vaping campaign, we can all do a better job identifying the signs of vaping among students, know and share information on the negative health effects with our students, and be very clear about the discipline consequences involved with vaping.

I am very grateful if your child has made the decision to not vape, and we will do everything we can to reinforce that wise choice each and every day. For those who are vaping, we will work with parents to provide educational resources and contacts for community agencies that may be able to provide assistance.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 1 out of every 10 middle and high school students use electronic vaping products. Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapor produced by an electronic vaporizer or electronic cigarette, which heats a liquid to generate an aerosol. The aerosol can contain harmful chemicals and particles that are inhaled deep into the lungs. Common additives used in these devices, depending on brand and type, may include nicotine, caffeine, cannabinoids (such as marijuana) and potentially other illicit drugs. Nicotine is highly addictive and exposure may harm the parts of the adolescent brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. Research has also shown that electronic cigarettes have resulted in a dramatic increase in marijuana use by students in the form of THC oil, which can be vaped.

School administrators often find that parents may not recognize the signs of vaping or the devices themselves. The liquids that are vaporized come in many different flavors and sometimes smell fruity, which may appeal to children. The devices come in different shapes and sizes. Some common styles we see resemble a thick pen, a stylus for an iPad, or a USB flash drive. Some devices are disposable, while others require a refill cartridge. Because of their small size, they can easily be hidden on a person or blend in with a normal backpack or pencil case.

Currently, the use and possession of all tobacco and/or intoxicating products is illegal for those under the age of 21. Students are not permitted to use, possess, or distribute tobacco products, electronic smoking devices, or their components (including lighters) while on school property. In an effort to deter students from vaping on campus, vape sensors are

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being installed in school restrooms. If a student is found to be using, possessing, or distributing any tobacco or smoking device, the student will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in School Board Policy, ranging from the Student Training Program (STP) to expulsion, depending on the content of the smoking device. The goal of this campaign is not to be punitive, but to educate our students on the dangers of vaping and encourage them to make choices that have a positive impact on both their health and education.

The health and safety of students is our top priority in the district. I thank you in advance for being a partner with us to help our students make positive decisions and encourage you to speak with your child regarding this topic. Below you will find images to help you recognize these devices, as well as online resource links. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Student Services office (850-833-3108) or your student's school administrator.



#### Useful Links:

- Electronic Cigarettes: [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm)
- Quick Facts: [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html)
- E-Cigarettes Shaped Like USB Flash Drive: [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/factsheet/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/factsheet/index.html)
- Youth and Tobacco Use: [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/youth\\_data/tobacco\\_use/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm)
- Extinguishing the Tobacco Epidemic in Florida: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/state-fact-sheets/florida/index.html>

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