

Gov. Evers: Takes action to address youth vaping

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MADISON – Gov. Tony Evers today announced a comprehensive agenda that will help combat vaping among kids and educate the public about the potential dangers associated with vaping products. Evers is directing state agencies to strengthen enforcement measures related to preventing the sale of vaping products to kids, bolster partnerships with public health officials and local school districts, educate the public on potential risks and hazards associated with the use of e-cigarettes and vapor products by kids, and prevent manipulative advertising to kids.

The governor is also calling on the legislature to pass a series of bills that would: ban vaping and vapor products on K-12 campuses; expand the definition of public health emergencies; fund a public health campaign to address youth vaping in Wisconsin; and expand enforcement capacity within the Departments of Revenue and Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection to prevent the sale of vaping products to kids. “As a parent, grandparent, and lifelong educator, I am deeply concerned about the health and well-being of our kids,” Gov. Evers said. “Vaping is a serious public health epidemic and it is time to take action. State agencies will continue to work closely with local public health officials, law enforcement, and the medical community to implement solutions, but we also need our partners in the legislature to join us in order to really move the needle. I hope to see these bills pass quickly and with bipartisan support.”

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, e-cigarette use by Wisconsin high school students jumped 154% between 2014 and 2018 and use by Wisconsin middle school students increased 272% between 2014 and 2018.

These products pose significant potential health risks, particularly to young users. The nicotine contained in e-cigarettes can harm the parts of the brain that control attention and learning, and data indicates that teens who use e-cigarettes are three times as likely to become cigarette smokers.

Gov. Evers has directed the Departments of Health Services, Revenue, and Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection to do the following:

The Department of Health Services will:

- Continue its robust collaboration with hospitals and other healthcare providers to investigate vaping-related diseases and identify and prevent new cases of dangerous and life-threatening vaping-related diseases.
- Bolster partnerships with the Department of Public Instruction and local school districts to develop, implement, and enforce tobacco-free policies and train educators to identify the different types of e-cigarettes and the risks that e-cigarettes pose to youth.
- Implement a public health campaign to inform parents about the different types of e-cigarettes, the risks that all types of e-cigarettes pose to youth, and strategies to work with their children to reduce e-cigarette exposure or eliminate its use.
- Develop and implement an outreach strategy to work with healthcare providers, pediatricians, and family physicians to identify and properly warn youth about the risks of using e-cigarettes during standard patient visits.
- Assess the effectiveness of various local, regional, and state-level cessation and tobacco prevention programming and target grant funding to advance high impact solutions to reducing youth e-cigarette use.

The Department of Revenue will:

- Explore ways to strengthen the enforcement of laws pertaining to vapor product excise taxes and tax fraud

The Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection will:

- Issue a consumer alert to inform individuals of potential risks and hazards associated with the use of e-cigarettes and vapor products by youth.
- Update consumer protection information and webpages to include information on reporting suspicious business activity related to the illicit sale of e-cigarettes and vapor products to youth.
- Share consumer protection and product safety information, tools, and inspection methods with local agencies and organizations interested in preventing manipulative advertising and scams targeting youth and reporting illicit e-cigarette and vapor product sales to youth.