

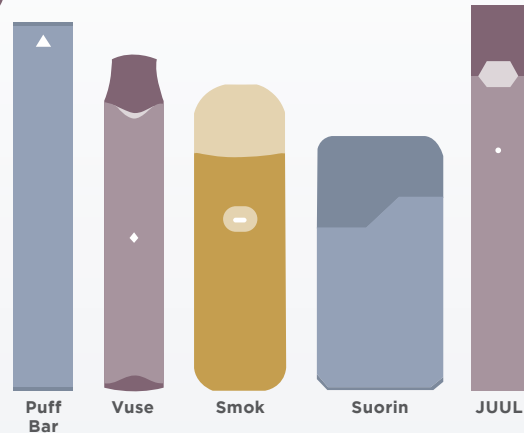
Mississippi Tobacco Facts: E-cigarette use, school suspension alternatives, and how schools, communities, parents, and youth can make a difference



E-Cigarettes are the **most commonly used** tobacco products among **youth** today.¹

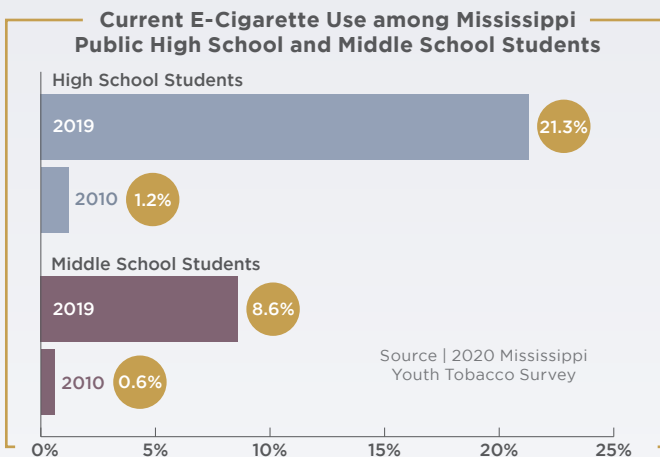
Youth vaping rates are 73% higher than they were four years ago, which makes vaping the first form of nicotine use for middle and high school students.^{2,3} Here in Mississippi, just over 1 out of 5 teens (21.3%) used e-cigarettes during the past 30 days in 2019.⁴ Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine; the vapor also contains cancer-causing chemicals and heavy metals.

1 in 5
Mississippi High School Kids Vape



“These punitive measures only contribute to negative educational and life outcomes. They only exacerbate the problem and create a bigger one for the future.”

Dr. Nelson Atehortua de la Pena | Dean of Jackson State University’s School of Public Health



Suspension alternatives that focus on counseling and education can be an effective approach to helping youth quit tobacco:

Considering Alternatives to School Suspensions

Schools typically use in-and out-of-school suspension penalties for e-cigarette use. Evidence shows that schools using harsher punishments may reduce graduation rates. Advocates for alternative measures argue that sending students home as punishment only worsens the problem as students will often be home alone vaping.

The Potential Negative Impacts of Suspension on Students

Increased chance of:

- early tobacco and other substance use
- dropping out of school
- disruptive behavior, like lying and theft
- poor academic achievement
- arrest and incarceration⁵

Healthy Futures

Stanford Medicine’s Tobacco Prevention toolkit offers 1-, 2-, and 4-hour Healthy Futures curriculum for free as an alternative model. <https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit-old/curriculums/HealthyFutures.html>

Catch My Breath

Youth vaping prevention program for grades 5-12 that equips students with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions. Presented by local Mississippi Tobacco Free Coalitions, this program meets national and state health education standards. For more information, go to Tobacco Free Coalitions, Mississippi State Department of Health msdh.ms.gov or call 601-991-6050. <https://catch.org/program/vaping-prevention>

INDEPTH

The American Lung Association’s program is an alternative for students who face suspensions for violation of school tobacco, vaping or nicotine use policies. Facilitator training is provided at no cost. <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/indepth>



What Schools Can Do

- **Pilot** suspension alternative programs that may encourage youth to continue learning in the school environment while quitting tobacco and e-cigarette products
- **Know** your school's data. Encourage administrators to collect specific data on tobacco use as a reason for suspension
- **Monitor** schools and districts that are implementing alternative practices to track effects on high school students
- **Keep up to date** with the annual Mississippi Youth Tobacco Survey data found at <https://mstobaccodata.org>
- **Offer** educational and awareness programs to students during school hours
- **Engage** parents and the community about the prevalence of e-cigarette usage in schools
- **Encourage** school counselors and nurses to interact with students on a personal level
- **Adopt** a Tobacco-Free Campus Model Policy (Policy 8417 may be found at msdh.ms.gov (8417 pdf))



What Communities Can Do

- **Pass** smoke-free ordinances that include e-cigarettes. Check here to see if your community has a comprehensive smoke-free ordinance: [ms-smoke-free-communities.pdf](#) (mstobaccodata.org)
- **Require** e-cigarette sellers to have a permit to sell in your community and use these funds to support law enforcement efforts to reduce illegal e-cigarette sales
- **Limit** the number of vape retailers in your community to reduce youth access
- **Learn** what communities, schools, and individuals are doing to reduce e-cigarette use by viewing the 2022 Virtual Vaping Summit, sponsored by Enrich MS and the Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Tobacco Control. Go to <https://enrichms.org>
- **Learn** more about the work of the Mississippi Tobacco Free Coalitions (MTFC's). For more information, go to: https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/43,0,94,756.html



What Parents Can Do

- **Talk** to your teen about vaping. Find conversation starters and tips at the American Lung Association's Talk to Your Child About Vaping: <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/talk-about-vaping>
- **Stay abreast** so you can spot e-cigarettes that can be hidden in plain sight. Vaping devices change as new products enter the market.
- **Be aware** of the signs of nicotine addiction and withdrawal and talk to your healthcare provider with any concerns. msdh.ms.gov (8416 pdf)
- **Report** e-cigarette retailers that sell vapes to teens by calling local law enforcement or the Mississippi Attorney General's Office at 601-359-4159
- **Text QUIT** to 202-899-7550 to sign up to receive text messages designed specifically for parents of vapers
- **Sign up** at [BecomeANEX.org](https://becomeanex.org) to access a supportive online community and full interactive website of information about how nicotine addiction works and different approaches to quit



What Teens Can Do

This Is Quitting

Ready to quit vaping? This program offers confidential, free, 24/7 quitting assistance for teens. Text VAPEFREEMS to 88709 to join the growing wave of young people getting help to stop vaping

Be You (BU) Youth Tobacco and Vaping Prevention Program

This youth-led activity series assesses the knowledge of students in targeted schools through a pre-and-post test model. BU youth leaders teach four sessions that give hard-hitting facts and burst myths about vaping. Each session aims to challenge what students know and how they can better serve themselves and their communities. They can be accessed through the youtube channel.

References

1. American Lung Association (n.d.) E-cigarettes & vaping: What parents should know. Retrieved from <https://www.lung.org/getmedia/a6d095c7-2c0b-436a-95f0-a1088c9ecf6e/e-cigarettes-parents.pdf?ext=.pdf>
2. American Lung Association (n.d.) Vape-free schools Initiative. Retrieved from <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/vape-free-schools>
3. Mississippi State Department of Health (n.d.) Electronic cigarettes. Retrieved from https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/43,0,94,705.html
4. Mississippi Tobacco Data. (2020) Mississippi Youth Tobacco Survey, 1998-2020. Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University.
5. Alaska Tobacco Facts: E-cigarette use, suspension, and academic outcomes among Alaska high school students. Retrieved from www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chroni

This brief is part of the Exhale series funded by the Mississippi State Department of Health Office of Tobacco Control.