

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

TOBACCO- AND E-CIGARETTE-FREE SCHOOLS: WHY IT MATTERS

Tobacco- and e-cigarette-free schools create healthy learning environments for students.

- Tobacco and e-cigarette use at school distracts from learning. Student tobacco use at school is linked to school failure and truancy.¹
- Tobacco- and e-cigarette-free schools reinforce lessons learned in the classroom about health and prevention.

Tobacco- and e-cigarette-free schools ensure positive role modeling by teachers, coaches, other staff, visitors, and peers.

- Students are more likely to smoke in a location where they have seen other students or adults smoking.² Tobacco- and e-cigarette-free schools allow every person the opportunity to learn positive behaviors from their peers and role models.
- A tobacco- and e-cigarette-free school represents a firm commitment by the school administration and staff to prohibit tobacco and e-cigarette use by students, employees, and visitors.

Tobacco- and e-cigarette-free schools eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.

- Secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard, and there is no safe level of exposure.³
- Whether indoors or outdoors, breathing even a small amount of secondhand smoke can have serious health consequences. Students with asthma or other breathing problems can have their condition triggered by secondhand smoke. Additionally, as little as 30 minutes of exposure to secondhand smoke can negatively affect the coronary arteries of healthy, young nonsmokers.^{4,5,6}

Tobacco- and e-cigarette-free schools protect youth from developing an addiction to a dangerous drug.

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration classifies nicotine, found in tobacco products and e-cigarettes, as a drug. School policies do not allow the use of other drugs, such as alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine on school grounds or at school-sponsored events.
- Almost 90% of adult smokers started smoking before they turned 18. If we can keep youth tobacco- and e-cigarette-free until age 18, most will never start using tobacco.⁷

It's the law. Tobacco- and e-cigarette-free schools comply with federal and state regulations.

- The Federal Pro-Children Act of 1994 states: "No person shall permit smoking within any indoor facility utilized for services to kindergarten, elementary, or secondary education or library services to children." This applies to all schools and programs that are funded by the federal government or through state and local governments.
- The Code of Virginia prohibits smoking in elementary, intermediate and secondary school buildings (§ 15.2-2824) and requires, "Each school board shall develop and implement a policy to prohibit the use of electronic cigarettes on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity" (§ 22.1-79.5) by July 1, 2015.