

Tobacco 21: Strong Local Impact



Jason McCoy (upper left) engages Concordia College students with the policy making process by attending Day At The Capitol.



Vaping devices are innovatively and strategically designed and marketed by the tobacco industry.

National Vaping Epidemic

The tobacco industry has long been known for its predatory marketing tactics to hooking youth to their deadly products. Unfortunately, the vaping industry is using that same playbook to influence youth to use addictive vaping devices at epidemic proportions. PartnerSHIP 4 Health's Tobacco Prevention Coordinator, Jason McCoy, MPH, has been leading tobacco reduction efforts in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties since 2015. McCoy's work is funded by ClearWay Minnesota, a nonprofit looking to reduce tobacco use through research, action, and collaboration.

Because of grant limitations, McCoy is not able to speak directly to students at schools, but instead provides educational seminars to teachers and to youth groups. He also works alongside communities to pass stronger policies that reduce youth's access to tobacco products.

Education and Policy Change

In November 2018, Otter Tail County became the first Minnesota county to pass a Tobacco 21 (T21) ordinance. Wilkin County followed in June 2019, as well as the Fergus Falls Municipality in October 2019. To date, 60 municipalities in Minnesota have adopted a T21 policy. With the national adoption of T21 in December 2019, reducing tobacco use in our youth is of clear importance.

However, communities are still encouraged to adopt their own policies at a local level to strengthen the language of the ordinances.

Jason has had the opportunity to work with the following school districts: Moorhead, Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton, Hawley, Detroit Lakes, Frazee-Vergas, Lake Park, Breckenridge, Campbell-Tinta, Rothsay, Fergus Falls, Pelican Rapids, Perham, Underwood and Parkers Prairie. He says, "If you're a parent or work with teens, talk to them about vaping. Talk to them early and often. Social media greatly influences our teenagers, and that is where the tobacco industry is reaching them with misinformation." If your school, youth group, or community needs education or guidance, please contact Jason McCoy at jason.mccoy@co.clay.mn.us for free resources.

DATE: February 2020
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