

# Raising the Awareness on the Harms of Vaping



Moorhead Senior High Student Mohamed Mustafa with Cassandra Stephan from MN Department of Health, Senior High Assistant Principal Angie Doll, and Elyse Les from Tobacco-Free Alliance

## The Concern for Vaping

Vaping use has increased dramatically among our youth. In 2020, the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey revealed that one in five Minnesota high school students reported having vaped in the past 30 days. "Even more troubling, 70% of these kids are showing signs of nicotine dependence like intolerable cravings, and 63% are having trouble quitting," said senior research scientist Sharrilyn Helgertz, who administers the survey for the Minnesota Department of Health. "Half of current e-cigarette users want help to quit."

## Partnering to Act

During the past year's school district wellness committee meetings, PartnerSHIP 4 Health heard concerns about student vaping use. We've provided anti-vaping resources and support to the 16 school districts we serve. Additionally, we're working with five of the districts on a vaping pilot project in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota's funded oral health initiative.

When Karen Nitzkowski, PartnerSHIP 4 Health's School Wellness Coordinator, attended a 10,000 Families event hosted by the University of Minnesota Extension, she was moved by the one student who gave a speech among many adult speakers. Mohamed Mustafa expressed his concern about how many students are

vaping at his school and his worry for his younger siblings being influenced by their peers.

## Protecting the Next Generation

Once we learned that Mohamed enjoys creating videos, we encouraged him to enter the Escape the Vape video contest. Not only did he enter along with 250 youth statewide, but he won the contest, garnering \$500 for him and \$500 for his school.

The Escape the Vape video contest asked Minnesota middle and high school students to create and submit a 30-second public service announcement video to educate their peers on the dangers of vaping. The contest, now in its second year, is a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Health; Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota; Tobacco-Free Alliance; CCF Advertising; Medtronic; the Minnesota Youth Council; and Allina Health's Change to Chill.

Voting was part of the contest as the public was able to vote for one of the top five choices determined by both a student advisory group and state tobacco experts. Mohamed's video received the most votes. "[I had] a lot of support from this high school, from the community members, and it was amazing," Mustafa said.

The award-winning video titled, "Don't Let Vaping Take That Away from You" cuts right to the chase. It is a message to middle and high school kids that vaping takes away too much from a student's success. "I hope it motivates others and just sends the message of, 'vaping is bad for you,'" Mohamed Mustafa said. Moorhead Senior High showed the winning video many times not only in classes but also on their school wide monitors.

View video

<https://youtu.be/UqELD7YVxOg>

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Learn more about PartnerSHIP 4 Health (local public health in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail and Wilkin counties) at <http://partnership4health.org701>