Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

New Vaping and Tobacco Laws…and What's Next in 200 Words

Adolescent Health & Well-Being

Date Posted:

Jan 28, 2020

Research shows the vast majority of adult smokers started smoking before turning 21, and most actually started before age 18. So it came as no surprise when in 2015, the National Academy of Medicine reported that "Tobacco 21" legislation—which would raise the age of sale for all tobacco products—could prevent more than 200,000 deaths among people born between 2000 and 2019. Last month, after years of hard work by public health and tobacco control groups, my colleagues and I were encouraged to see Tobacco 21 finally become the law of the land.

While this new law is a public health victory, other recent federal action falls short. The teen vaping epidemic continues to grow and we know that flavors, which can lead to experimentation with tobacco products, regular use, and addiction, have fueled use among teens. That's why a new policy pulling **only *some* flavored e-cigarettes from the market does not adequately protect youth**. Allowing menthol-flavored pod devices in traditional retail settings and all flavors in refillable tank-based products sold at vape shops will continue to draw teens to vaping.

We've made strides, but preventing a teen from ever picking up a tobacco product is ultimately the most effective way to save lives and help youth and families live tobacco-free. As we look ahead, we need to ensure new Tobacco 21 laws are enforced. We must also eliminate all flavored tobacco products, stop online sales, and increase taxes on all tobacco products including e-cigarettes. These evidence-based approaches are critical next steps in our effort to continue to reduce youth tobacco use.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Strategic Operations & Communications Director Lauren Walens.

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