What School Districts Should Consider in Addressing Vaping

Prevention:

1. Each town has a Local Prevention Council that meets monthly during the school year to coordinate prevention education and awareness campaigns and activities. Middle and high schools should send a representative who can help connect school needs with community resources and share information.

2. Parents don’t necessarily know what vapes LOOK like. Parents also DO NOT THINK that their kids are vaping; however, kids are vaping across all gender / economic / demographic groups, even in elementary school. Parents don’t know how to talk to their kids about it. Some still believe that vaping is a safer alternative to smoking.
   - Share videos, factsheets and discussion tips for parents on a regular basis (available at thehubct.org/nicotine-vaping, updated frequently from CDC, Surgeon General, etc.)
   - Consider a “Hidden in Plain Sight” activity where families explore a teen bedroom to see how vapes and drugs can be hidden. Positive Directions (Westport) can provide the program.
   - Students in some towns (e.g., Greenwich and Norwalk) are making videos to educate their parents.

3. Teachers should use consistent messaging.
   - The Stanford University vaping curriculum is available at thehubct.org/nicotine-vaping.
   - Posters, brochures and factsheets are available on request from ctclearinghouse.org

4. Students generally know a lot about vaping, including its risks, but remain curious to try.
   - It’s important to emphasize that the majority (about 70%) of high school students are NOT vaping, rather than to use terms like “epidemic” that make it sound like everybody is doing it.
   - They need to learn refusal skills as well as alternatives.

Consequences:

1. Schools should publicize their vaping policies, including consequences, JRB referrals, etc., to students, parents, and SROs. Some SROs have shared that they do not know their own school’s policies.

2. Students who are found vaping should be screened to identify the appropriate supports. Some students may be casual / social vapers. Others may be addicted to nicotine (which is as addictive as heroin). Others may be addicted to marijuana, which is commonly vaped. Others may have a larger substance use problem or may be using vaping to cope with depression or anxiety.
3. In lieu of ISS or OSS, consider **restorative practices**, including health education, smoking cessation, alternatives. Programs available include:

   a. INDEPTH is an alternative to suspension program for schools. After taking the program, 60% of students reported they were willing to quit using nicotine products. Schools can get trained FREE online. Materials are downloadable.
   
   b. VapeEducate.com – online vaping education currently being tested in Stratford and considered in other towns
   
   c. Freedom from Smoking (FFS)
   
   d. “Vape Talk” downloadable conversation guide
   
   e. Norwalk Public Schools recently piloted a Saturday program in conjunction with The Hub’s SMART Recovery teen support group

**Quitting Support:**

1. Students who are addicted need support, not discipline. Taking a vape away from someone who is addicted is not a solution.

   a. Truth Initiative has a program called “this is quitting” that some states are contracting with
   
   b. CT Quitline (800 QUIT NOW) can provide support and Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs), such as patches. However, NRT doesn’t always work with teens.
   
   c. Teen vaping cessation supports:
      i. Text QUIT to (202) 804-9884 to receive messages
      ii. Smokestoppers for Teens group at St. Vincent’s Medical Center, 203-576-5451
      iii. SMART Recovery teen group in Norwalk
      iv. MyLife.MyQuit
   
   d. Federal resources:
      i. Teen.smokefree.gov
      ii. Therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov

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