

# Countering Tobacco and E-cigarette Industry Influences in Your Community: An Action Guide



## Purpose

This guide can help community members and organizations resist tobacco and e-cigarette (vape) industry influences, connect people who smoke or vape to treatment, and reduce people's exposure to secondhand smoke.



## Background

Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and other diseases. Secondhand smoke increases the risk of asthma attacks and respiratory illnesses in children as well as stroke, heart disease and lung cancer in adults who do not smoke. E-cigarettes can contain addictive nicotine and harmful chemicals, and cause serious lung injury.

Adult tobacco use in New York City (NYC) has declined since the early 2000s, but some New Yorkers still smoke and receive treatment less than others. Discrimination based on social identities (including race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sex and gender, and sexual orientation) exposes certain communities to more factors that encourage smoking (such as tobacco marketing, access to tobacco retailers and stress) and fewer factors that prevent or treat smoking (such as medications and healthier coping resources).

Tobacco and e-cigarette companies continue to promote and create new products, which decreases the effectiveness of tobacco laws and programs. New products (such as e-cigarettes; heated tobacco products; and recreational nicotine toothpicks, gum and pouches) often appeal to young people and may cause long-term health effects. Smoking and vaping litter, which includes cigarettes, plastic, toxic tobacco and batteries, are also harmful to the environment.

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) acknowledges the role of structural racism and other discrimination in current smoking- and vaping-related inequities. For resources to implement equitable and meaningful engagement and activities in your community, visit [nyc.gov/health](https://nyc.gov/health) and search for **race to justice**.

# What Your Organization Can Do



## Support People Who Smoke

### ✔ Share available treatment options.

Counseling and tobacco treatment medications, including nicotine replacement therapy (such as gum, lozenges and patches), can double someone's chances of quitting. People who smoke can:

- Talk to their health care provider about tobacco treatment medications and counseling. Most health insurance plans, including Medicaid, cover medication options to help New Yorkers quit.
- Visit [nysmokefree.com](http://nysmokefree.com) or call 866-NY-QUITS (866-697-8487) to apply for a free starter kit of nicotine medications and talk to a quit coach.
- Visit [asiansmokersquitline.org](http://asiansmokersquitline.org), or call the Asian Smokers' Quitline if their preferred language is Chinese (800-838-8917), Korean (800-556-5564) or Vietnamese (800-778-8440).
- Visit [nyc.gov/health/map](http://nyc.gov/health/map) to find local quit-smoking and quit-vaping programs.
- Text "DROPTHEVAPE" to 88709 (if age 13 to 24) to join a free, confidential text message program for help quitting vaping and staying vape-free.



If someone is not ready to quit, treatment is still available to help them cut back or stay smoke-free. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search for **nicotine withdrawal**.

- ✔ **Share printed and digital information about the harms of smoking and vaping as well as tobacco and e-cigarette company marketing.** See “Order Educational Materials” on Page 10, “NYC Health Department Resources” on Page 11 and “Additional Resources” on Page 12.
- ✔ **Celebrate tobacco awareness days and months.** See “Tobacco Awareness Calendar” on Pages 8 and 9.



## Implement Organizational Policies

- ✔ **Promote treatment options to employees through worksite wellness programs and employee benefits.** See “Support People Who Smoke” on the previous page and “Order Educational Materials” on Page 10 for resources you can share.
- ✔ **Follow the Smoke Free Air Act.**
  - Prohibit smoking and vaping in your building.
  - Post no-smoking signs.
  - Distribute no-smoking policies to staff.

For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health/tobaccocontrol](https://nyc.gov/health/tobaccocontrol).

- ✔ **Adopt an outdoor smoke-free air rule around your building,** which will help limit secondhand smoke exposure and reduce the cost of cleaning smoking litter. Call **311** to request “Voluntary No Smoking” signs or make your own.  
For more information, visit [nycsmokefree.org](https://nycsmokefree.org).



- ✔ **Reject donations, materials and services from tobacco and e-cigarette companies.**

Read the Truth Initiative's pledge at [truthinitiative.org/stop-the-influence](https://truthinitiative.org/stop-the-influence).



## Develop Community-based Interventions

- ✔ **Collect information about the effects of tobacco and e-cigarette products on your community.**
  - Collect stories from and create photovoice projects with community members to learn about their experiences. For more information, visit [ctb.ku.edu](https://ctb.ku.edu) and search for **photovoice**.
  - Look for tobacco and e-cigarette retailers and targeted marketing in your community.
- ✔ **Share your findings and concerns with your community and community leaders to advocate for change.**
  - Use your organization's social media, newsletter or website.
  - Contact members of the media.
  - Write letters to newspaper or magazine editors.
  - Hold meetings or events.





## Help Keep Your Community Safe

✓ **Learn about retail tobacco laws.** Retail tobacco laws help make sure only legal, regulated products are sold, and tobacco and e-cigarette products are not sold to young people. Retailers must:

- Have relevant licenses and registration to sell tobacco and e-cigarette products
- Only sell tobacco products that are unflavored or tobacco-, menthol-, mint- or wintergreen-flavored
- Only sell e-cigarettes, e-liquids or liquid nicotine that are tobacco-flavored or unflavored
- Only sell tobacco or e-cigarette products for the required price
- Only sell tobacco products in required package sizes. Individual cigarettes (or “loosies”) cannot be sold.
- **Not** sell cigarettes and other tobacco and e-cigarette products to people younger than age 21



For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health](https://www.nyc.gov/health) and search for **tobacco laws**.

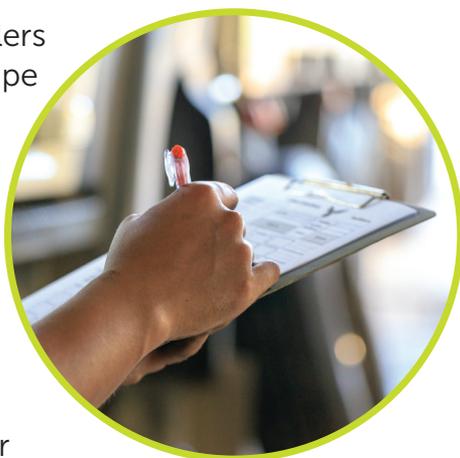
✓ **Learn about smoke-free air laws.** Smoke-free air laws help protect people who do not smoke or vape from exposure to secondhand smoke and aerosols. Smoking and vaping are not allowed in:

- Most workplaces and public spaces
- Indoor common areas of residential buildings with three or more units

Owners of residential buildings with three or more units are required to create a smoking policy and share it with current and future tenants. The policy must describe where smoking is allowed and not allowed on the property, including all outdoor and indoor locations (such as apartments). For more information, visit [nyc.gov/health/tobaccocontrol](https://nyc.gov/health/tobaccocontrol).

✔ **Report violations.** Most retailers and people who smoke or vape follow the law. However, if you think a tobacco law is being broken, you can:

- Document the potential violation. Write down the date, time, location, potential violation and any harm the violation caused. Take pictures of products or signage (not people) if safe or possible.
- Call **311** to report the violation. 311 will track your complaint and send the information to the correct agency. To report online, visit [nyc.gov/311/report-problems](https://nyc.gov/311/report-problems) and search for **smoking complaint**, **sale to minor complaint** (for prohibited product sales to people younger than age 21) or **tobacco product sale complaint** (for sales of flavored tobacco products).
- Report the sale or transport of untaxed cigarettes to the NYC Department of Finance. Call the Tax Evasion and Property Tax Fraud Hotline at 718-707-2100, or visit [nyc.gov/finance](https://nyc.gov/finance) and search for **tax evasion**.
- Talk to building owners and managers, and community members about secondhand smoke. Ask building owners and managers to fill cracks in walls, flooring



and spaces around plumbing between apartments, and to check ventilation systems. Encourage community members to talk or write to their neighbors in a friendly, nonjudgmental way if secondhand smoke is coming from their apartment. Explain to community members how secondhand smoke can affect their and their family's health, and ask if you can help them reach out to neighbors.

Complaints may result in different actions, including warning letters, inspections, fines or other penalties.



# Tobacco Awareness Calendar

You can adapt the following content for your website, social media or newsletter:

## There are many reasons to quit smoking:

- ✔ Reduce your risk of cancer, heart disease and stroke.
- ✔ Protect your loved ones from secondhand smoke.
- ✔ Save money.

Apply for a free starter kit of nicotine medications and talk to a quit coach today. Call 866-NY-QUITS (866-697-8487) or visit [nysmokefree.com](https://nysmokefree.com).

Did you know that quitting smoking can lower your risk for lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer death in NYC? Ask your health care provider if you qualify for an annual lung cancer screening. It may save your life. Visit [on.nyc.gov/2BmCwSp](https://on.nyc.gov/2BmCwSp) to learn more.

Nicotine replacement therapy can help you stay smoke-free when you want to avoid smoking, such as at work or around others at home. For more information on treatment medications to help you manage nicotine cravings, visit [on.nyc.gov/tobacco-treatment-guide](https://on.nyc.gov/tobacco-treatment-guide).

Vaping can cause lung injury and may affect lung health in other ways. Every time you vape, you inhale harmful chemicals and addictive nicotine. Teens and young adults (age 13 to 24) can text "DROPTHEVAPE" to 88709 to get free and confidential help quitting.

It may be helpful to time your communications with some of the following holidays and awareness days and months:



**New Year's Day**  
(January 1)



**World Lung Cancer Day** (August 1)



**American Heart Month** (February)



**Healthy Aging Month** (September)



**Take Down Tobacco National Day of Action** (April 1)



**Lung Health Day**  
(Fourth Wednesday in October)



**World Asthma Day**  
(May 3)



**Healthy Lungs Month** (October)



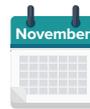
**No Menthol Sunday**  
(Third Sunday in May)



**Great American Smokeout**  
(Third Thursday in November)



**World No Tobacco Day** (May 31)



**Lung Cancer Awareness Month**  
(November)



**Men's Health Month**  
(June)

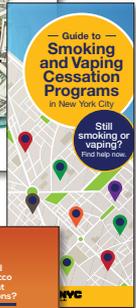
# Order Educational Materials

Call **311** to order the following materials. Most are available in multiple languages. For PDFs of these materials, visit [nyc.gov/nycquits](http://nyc.gov/nycquits) or related webpages.



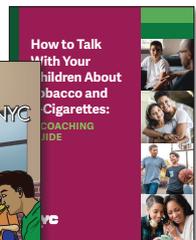
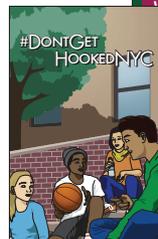
## Materials for Adults

- Still Smoking? Booklet
- Quit to Save Brochure
- What Is Your Relationship With Tobacco? Quiz
- How to Use Tobacco Treatment Medications Pocket Guide
- How Can I Get Tobacco Treatment Medications? Insurance Guide
- Guide to Smoking and Vaping Cessation Programs in New York City Brochure
- Smoke-Free Housing Health Bulletin
- E-cigarettes Health Bulletin
- Still Smoking or Vaping? Summary



## Materials for Youth and Parents

- #DontGetHookedNYC Comic Book
- Teens and Vaping: What Are the Risks? Fact Sheet
- How to Talk With Your Children About Tobacco and E-Cigarettes: A Coaching Guide



## NYC Health Department Resources

Visit [nyc.gov/nycquits](https://nyc.gov/nycquits) for general information on smoking and links to webpages on topics such as coping with nicotine withdrawal, e-cigarettes, hookah, smoke-free housing, smoke-free air laws, and tobacco and e-cigarette retailers.

For tobacco and e-cigarette product use data, visit [nyc.gov/health/epiquery](https://nyc.gov/health/epiquery), click **Healthy Living** and select **Smoking** from the drop-down menu. If you have a question about any data, email [tobacco@health.nyc.gov](mailto:tobacco@health.nyc.gov).

Connect with us on social media:

 Facebook: **NYC Quits Smoking**

 Twitter: **@nychealthy**

 YouTube: **nychealth**

 Instagram: **@nychealthy**

 Tumblr: **nychealth**



## Additional Resources

**African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council:**

Visit [savingblacklives.org](https://savingblacklives.org).

**American Cancer Society:** Visit [cancer.org](https://cancer.org) and search for **tobacco and cancer**.

**American Heart Association:** Visit [heart.org](https://heart.org) and search for **tobacco**.

**American Lung Association:** Visit [lung.org](https://lung.org).

**Asian Americans for Equality:** Visit [aafe.org](https://aafe.org).

**Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids:** Visit [tobaccofreekids.org](https://tobaccofreekids.org).

**Center for Black Health and Equity:**

Visit [centerforblackhealth.org](https://centerforblackhealth.org).

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** Visit [cdc.gov/tobacco](https://cdc.gov/tobacco) or [cdc.gov/ecigarettes](https://cdc.gov/ecigarettes).

**National Hispanic Medical Association:** Visit [nhmamd.org](https://nhmamd.org).

**National LGBT Cancer Network:**

Visit [cancer-network.org/outlast-tobacco](https://cancer-network.org/outlast-tobacco).

**NYC Smoke-Free:** Visit [nycsmokefree.org](https://nycsmokefree.org).

**Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes:**

Visit [parentsagainstvaping.org](https://parentsagainstvaping.org).

**Public Health Law Center:** Visit [publichealthlawcenter.org](https://publichealthlawcenter.org) and search for **tobacco control**.

**Smokefree:** Visit [smokefree.gov](https://smokefree.gov).

**Truth Campaign:** Visit [thetruth.com](https://thetruth.com). For information about environmental impacts, visit [thetruth.com](https://thetruth.com) and search for **tobacco and the environment**.



