

## Community Group Coming Together to Encourage School Districts in Linn County to Adopt Policy Restricting Electronic Smoking Devices in Schools

### *Summary*

Thanks to the collaboration of the Linn Together group and participating community partners an initiative has been created to encourage Linn County School Districts and Schools to adopt a gold standard policy and parent/student handbook language restricting the use of electronic smoking devices (includes e-cigarettes and other nicotine delivery devices) in Linn County schools.

### *Challenge*

E-cigarettes and other nicotine delivery devices are becoming increasingly popular among Linn County youth. Although these devices contain nicotine derived from tobacco they are not currently subject to regulation as tobacco products, and there are no age requirements for purchase or use.

Nicotine delivery devices are designed to mimic the act of smoking tobacco by producing an appealing flavored aerosol that looks and feels like tobacco smoke. Although nicotine delivery devices do not produce tobacco smoke they do contain nicotine and other potentially harmful chemicals. Nicotine delivery devices have been marketed as safer alternatives to traditional cigarettes; however, little is actually known about the public health implications of using these devices. Research suggests that adolescents may be sensitive to nicotine and can become addicted more easily than adults. Furthermore, the younger individuals are when they initiate use the more likely they are to become addicted later in life.

### *Concerns*

- E-cigarettes and other nicotine delivery devices are not currently included in all Linn County school district tobacco policies or parent/student handbooks
- Nicotine is a highly addictive drug
- Students may be exposed to toxic levels of nicotine
- Nicotine delivery devices and other flavored vape devices are used to deliver other harmful and illegal substances

### *Solution*

An educational effort on electronic smoking devices as they relate to youth and youth access inspired the Linn Together group to create a workgroup to address this issue in the community. From that workgroup, an informational packet was developed. The packet includes: a letter to the school district superintendent/school principal, fact sheets about electronic smoking devices, recommended gold standard district policy language, and sample language for parent/student handbooks. The group is in the process of getting approval to distribute to the school district partners and school principals. The group plans to present at school board meetings and provide technical assistance as necessary.

### *Results/Sustaining Success*

The group is hoping the initiative will result in all of the school districts and schools in Linn County adopting the recommended School District Policy and sample parent/student handbook language.