

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: COVID-19-Quitting Now is Critical**

In light of the Pandemic, SAFE Executive Director, Dr. Sharon Harris along with SAFE's longtime educational resource partner, Tobacco Action Coalition of LI (TAC)-Manager, Carol Meschkow would like to remind the Community, that it is even more critical now than ever to make our youth aware of the dangers of tobacco products and good lung health. The harmful impact of smoking on the lungs has been researched and documented for years, and there is conclusive evidence that smoking increases the risk for respiratory infections, weakens the immune system, and is a major cause of a number of chronic health conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease and diabetes

From very first day of someone's Quit attempt they start to reap health benefits to every major organ and system of the body, from one's brain to their DNA. Quitting positively impacts major organs and systems that are essential to help one's immune system fight off infection and disease such as; the lungs and circulatory system. Per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the cilia in your lungs are one of the first parts of your body to heal. These hair-like projections wave back and forth like a brush sweeping as air moves in and out of your lungs. They help your body ward off colds and respiratory infection and help clear mucus. If this process is impeded the mucus can build up in one's lungs. The CDC maintains the relationship between the use of vaping products and the risk of contracting and recovery from Covid-19 is uncertain. Further, as vaping is a relatively new product at this time there isn't the science we have with smoking to support this relationship. However, there is data that has been collected demonstrating that electronic cigarettes vapor contains ingredients that are harmful when inhaled.

The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids and other experts, have begun to speculate and purport that there may be an association between vaping and being at a higher risk for Covid-19. Although agreed there isn't a half century of science, as with smoking, some lab research shows the function of cilia cells is also impaired when they're exposed to chemicals in vaping liquid and can make one more susceptible, and have a harder time recovering from *respiratory* illness. One in four High School Students in the U.S. uses e-cigarettes. This statistic was a dangerous trend before Covid-19. But now it's even more troubling. Behaviors that weaken the lungs put kids at higher risk. Nationally, 5.3 Million Middle and High School students use these products, which mean that even if your child is not using e-cigarettes, they almost certainly have friends who are. The rate of teen E-cigarette use has more than doubled between 2017 and 2019. This alarming escalation in use reached a level that the U.S. Surgeon General declared the problem an "epidemic."

To that end, it couldn't be more timely than the recent announcement that the NYS Department of Health partnered with the "Truth Initiative", in developing a youth oriented NYS-specific version of the text based intervention "This is Quitting" program. To access this program, users just need to text "DropTheVape" to 88709. The free text message program was created with valuable input from teenagers, college students and young adults who have attempted to, or successfully quit vaping. It is specifically tailored to age groups (13-17 and 18-24) to give appropriate quitting recommendations. It's very simple, upon enrolling in the text message program, users receive interactive daily text messages tailored to their sign-up date or their target quit date, should the user choose to set one. Messages include encouragement, motivation, skill and self-efficacy building exercises and coping strategies. Messages are available for at least one month if a user does not have a quit date set. If a user sets a quit date, they receive messages for at least one-week prior to the quit date and at least two months following the quit date, which they may change at any time. The program also directs users to the New York State Quitline, who recently

added free quit-coaching and nicotine replacement therapy this past fall for eligible users of e-cigarettes to address to help break their dependence on vaping.

During this unprecedented time of social distancing, and the associated closing of schools, it's a good time whether your teens have or have not expressed an interest in Quitting to start the conversation. The most important thing to strive for is creating an open and non-threatening environment to encourage dialog and connect with teens.

The following are some recommendations from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids to help parents initiate the conversation and keep it meaningful and productive:

- Listen more, talk less. **Don't lose your cool.** Just because they know or are asking about vaping doesn't mean they're doing it. Pause before you respond.
- **Pick the best time and location to hold the conversation.** Parents know their child and know when they're most receptive to a conversation.
- **Keep the salient points brief.** Quick, frequent conversations are much more effective than one big sit down conversation.
- **Strive to target all teachable moments.** Don't bring it back to people they know; no one wants their friends judged. But e-cigarettes are often in the news or part of an assembly at school. Make the conversation relevant, and your child won't feel like you're bringing up vaping out of nowhere.
- **Don't stress if you don't have all the answers.** Whether it's about vaping or about how to combat peer pressure, regularly communicating and keeping the dialog going with teens is always beneficial.

There is no better time than now to Quit!

The New York State Department of Health is the Department of the New York State Government responsible for Public Health. Their mission is to protect, improve and promote the health, productivity and well-being of all New Yorkers. For more information please visit [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov).

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. The Coalition is concerned about all gateway drugs including tobacco products; and strives to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences and the detrimental effects of nicotine on our youth.

To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please visit [www.safeglen Cove.org](http://www.safeglen Cove.org). For more information on vaping click on the Vaping Facts and Myths page.

For Quit help contact the NYS Quit Line: at 1-866-NYS-Quits