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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Protecting Teens from the Dangers of Tobacco and Vaping Products**

According to the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) despite lower rates of smoking in 2021 in general, 2.55 million middle and high school students reported actively using a tobacco product. Over 60 % of students who reported using a tobacco product also reported at least one attempt to quit in the previous 12 months. To protect youth from the harms of tobacco products, prevention is key. That includes education in school and at home, and efforts to reduce the Tobacco and Vaping Industries marketing strategies to focus on enticing youth advertising. For youth addicted to nicotine there are many support and cessation programs available from American Lung Association and NYS Department of Health Quitline specifically designed for teens to protect them from the life-long harms of first-, second- and thirdhand smoke.

As reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Tobacco Survey was conducted among U.S. middle and high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that youth tobacco use remains a serious public health concern. About 2.55 million U.S. middle and high school students reported current (past 30-day) use of a tobacco product in 2021, according to [new data](#) published on March 11 in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Because of the implementation of COVID-19 protocols across the country when the 2021 survey was conducted (January 18–May 21, 2021) it was administered online to allow eligible students to complete the survey at home, school, or somewhere else. While the authors of the study remain confident in the study results, the reporting of tobacco use might differ by the setting where the survey was completed. Therefore, these results cannot be compared with results from previous NYTS surveys that were primarily conducted on school campuses. Karen Hacker, M.D., M.P.H., Director of CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion said, “Youth use of tobacco products is unsafe in any form – combustible, smokeless, or electronic,” further “this report provides critical insights needed to combat this serious public health concern and help protect our nation’s youth from the harmful effects of tobacco.”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the CDC collaborated to analyze data from the 2021 NYTS. Among middle and high school students who currently used tobacco products about 1 in 3 (860,000) used at least one type of combustible tobacco product, and about 3 in 10 (740,000) used two or more tobacco products. E -cigarettes were the most common tobacco product currently used among middle and high school students (2.06 million) in 2021, followed by cigarettes (410,000), cigars (380,000), smokeless tobacco (240,000), hookahs (220,000), nicotine pouches (200,000), heated tobacco products (170,000), and pipe tobacco (80,000). Among the approximately 2.55 million students who currently used any tobacco product, 65.3% reported that they were seriously thinking about quitting all tobacco products. In addition, 60.2% of students who currently used tobacco products reported that they stopped using all tobacco products for 1 or more days during the past 12 months because they were trying to quit.

Reflected in the data of great concern to researchers was the disparities in subgroups. Among middle and high school students combined, current use of any tobacco product was higher among students who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (14.2%) than those who identified as heterosexual (7.9%) and those who were “not sure” about their sexual identity (5.5%); and higher among students who identified as transgender (18.9%) compared to those not transgender (8.2%) or not sure (9.1%). Current use of any tobacco product was higher among students who had severe (14.2%),

moderate (11.2%), or mild (9.6%) symptoms of psychological distress compared to those with no psychological distress (5.5%). Additionally, among all race and ethnicity groups, non-Hispanic Black students reported the highest prevalence of current combustible tobacco product use (5.2%), and specifically cigar use (3.1%). While youth use of tobacco products in any form is unsafe, this result is concerning because death and disease from tobacco product use in the United States is primarily caused by combustible tobacco products.

It was noted that multiple factors continue to promote tobacco product use and initiation among youth, including flavors, marketing, and misperceptions of harm. Among the approximately 2.55 million middle and high school students who currently used any tobacco product, most (about 8 in 10 or 1.95 million) reported using flavored tobacco product(s) in the past 30 days. Approximately 76% of students in 2021 reported exposure to tobacco product marketing through traditional media (e.g., newspapers or magazines), and approximately 74% of students who used social media had ever seen e-cigarette–related posts or content. Students who had ever used e-cigarettes, peer use and curiosity were the most cited reasons for first trying e-cigarettes in 2021. However, among students who currently used e-cigarettes, the most cited reasons for use were feelings of anxiety, stress, or depression and the “high or buzz” associated with nicotine use. Importantly, nicotine withdrawal is commonly accompanied by symptoms of anxiety and depression, and temporary relief of these symptoms through use of a nicotine-containing product might perpetuate continued nicotine use.

The researchers maintain the 2021 NYTS findings include important new information about youth tobacco use behaviors and associated factors that will help the FDA evaluate, design, and implement our tobacco regulatory and educational programs. It’s revealing that about two-thirds of current youth users expressed a desire to quit tobacco products and that three-quarters of youth reported having seen or heard a tobacco prevention ad. But the 2021 use data are still concerning and will be valuable for policymakers and educators committed to protecting the next generation from tobacco-related disease and death.

Tobacco product use remains the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death in the United States. Nearly all tobacco use begins during youth and young adulthood. Nicotine—the addictive drug found in tobacco products—can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s. Researchers suggest that for Parents, educators, youth advocates, and health care providers to continue on-going education and supporting and encouraging youth to quit in order to help protect youth from the harms of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. Other strategies to reduce tobacco product use and initiation among all youth included: increasing prices of tobacco products; establishing comprehensive clean indoor air policies that denormalize tobacco to prevent youth initiation and protect the public from exposure to secondhand smoke and e-cigarette aerosol; sustaining media campaigns that warn about the dangers of tobacco product use; reducing youth access to tobacco products, including enforcement of the Federal Tobacco 21 Law against retailers who violate the law; and restricting the sales of flavored e-cigarettes.

To learn more about Preventing youth from using tobacco products, visit [www.betobaccofree.gov](http://www.betobaccofree.gov) and FDA’s “[The Real Cost](#)” campaign.

New York State Smokers’ Quitline assists thousands of New Yorkers every year in their attempts to break free from smoking and other tobacco use by providing information, expert quit coaching, support, and free starter kits of nicotine replacement therapy. The service is free and confidential. Call 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487), text 716-309-4688, or visit the New York State Smokers’ Quitline at <https://www.nysmokefree.com/> for more information or to speak with a Quit Coach, or you may contact the American Lung Association at the Lung Helpline at 1-800-LUNGUSA for support and resources.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about tobacco use and vaping seeking to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [ww.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](http://ww.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit the Vaping

Facts and Myths Page of SAFE's website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health  
[www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).