

Rhode Island Tobacco-Free Schools Model Policy

Use of all tobacco and nicotine products including e-cigarettes is prohibited

Initially launched September 2019

Revised August 2022 and August 2024

This Policy Model is recommended by the Rhode Island Department of Health, Rhode Island Student Assistance Services, American Lung Association and American Heart Association. This policy provides guidance for schools regarding tobacco and nicotine. It is intended for schools to use as is or with adjustments to sanctions to fit the district's and their students' needs. A proactive school-wide education program should complement it.

SECTION I. RATIONALE

Commercial* tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Nearly 9 out of 10 (90%) adults who currently smoke cigarettes started using tobacco/nicotine products by age 18, and 99% started by age 26. Data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) showed that 16.5% of Rhode Island high school students currently use Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) and 32.4% had ever used ENDS. Flavored ENDS appeal to and are popular among youth. Flavors decrease perceptions of harm, help mask the harsh taste of tobacco, and play an influential role in the initiation and uptake of tobacco products. Flavors also increase the likelihood of developing nicotine addiction. ENDS use can impact a young person's respiratory health, brain development, mood, sleep, and immune function. Youth ENDS users are also at an increased risk of initiating smoking cigarettes.

The use of tobacco products, including ENDS, on school grounds, in school buildings and facilities, on school property, at school-related activities, and at athletic events or school-sponsored events, is detrimental to the health and safety of students, staff and visitors. In Rhode Island (RI), state law prohibits the use of tobacco products, including ENDS such as but not limited to Vuse, JUUL, Breeze Smoke, Elfbar, NJOY etc., by any person utilizing school facilities. This means that students, parents, contractors, faculty, staff, administrators, and all other visitors must be tobacco-free in and around all facilities used by a school, whether owned, leased, or rented, including but not limited to: school playgrounds, school administration buildings, indoor school athletic facilities, school gymnasiums, school locker rooms, school buses, other school vehicles, and other school buildings whose use is not primarily residential.

The state law applies to all RI public, private, and charter elementary and secondary schools. The governing body of each school is responsible for the development of enforcement procedures to implement the law. This model policy is intended to help school districts comply with that provision.

In addition, the law requires all school areas where the use of tobacco products, including ENDS, is prohibited to be clearly marked with tobacco-free signage. There shall be at least one sign at every building entrance and in other areas as designated by the governing body. Downloadable signs are available below.

**Note: All references to "tobacco" in this document refer to commercial tobacco products and do not refer to the sacred or ceremonial use of tobacco.*

- **RI Tobacco-Free School Campus Sign:**
 - [English Signage](#) and [Spanish Signage](#)
 - Further signage available by contacting [Rhode Island Department of Health](#)
- [Read](#) Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 23-20.9-4: Smoking in Schools, Definitions
- [Read](#) Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 23-20.9-5: Smoking in Schools, Regulation of smoking in schools

SECTION II. DEFINITIONS

Administrator - Person(s) including but not limited to principals, vice-principals, office personnel, and others who have conduct and managerial authority to enforce school policies.

Parent/Guardian - Person(s) that have legal guardian status and responsibility for a student enrolled in [\[insert district/school name\]](#) for educational purposes.

Person(s) - Includes students, parents, contractors, faculty, staff, administrators, and all other visitors.

School building - Any building or enclosed walkway that is owned, leased, or rented for educational purposes or extracurricular activities.

School grounds - All school buildings, parking lots, athletic fields, loading docks, school outdoor facilities, and other premises owned, leased, or rented for educational purposes or extracurricular activities.

Smoking - "Smoking" or "smoke", the inhaling, exhaling, burning, or carrying of any lighted or heated cigar, cigarette, pipe, weed, plant, other tobacco product or plant product, or other combustible substance in any manner or in any form intended for inhalation in any manner or form. "Smoking" or "smoke" also includes the use of electronic cigarettes, electronic cigars, electronic pipes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, or other similar products that rely on vaporization or aerosolization.

Staff - Person(s) employed by [\[insert district/school name\]](#) as a full-time or part-time employee, independent contractor, or volunteer.

Student - Person(s) legally enrolled in [\[insert district/school name\]](#) for educational purposes.

Tobacco paraphernalia - Any device used to aid, ingest, light, burn, or consume any tobacco or nicotine containing product as defined herein, including but not limited to pipes, rolling papers, matches or any component or part of a tobacco or nicotine product.

Tobacco product(s) - RIGL § 11-9-.13.4 Any product(s) containing, made of, or derived from tobacco or nicotine that is intended for human consumption or is likely to be consumed, whether inhaled, absorbed, or ingested by any other means, including, but not limited to, a cigarette, a little cigar as defined in RIGL § 44-20.2-1, and any and all products as defined in RIGL § 44-20-1, ENDS or any added substance that may be aerosolized, vaporized, or otherwise delivered by an ENDS device, whether or not that substance contains nicotine.

- "Tobacco product(s)" does not include drugs, devices, or combination products intended to treat tobacco or nicotine dependence that are authorized by the United States Food and Drug Administration, as those terms are defined in the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. Nor

does it include such authorized drugs, devices, or combination products with such treatment purpose by individuals under age twenty-one (21) if prescribed by a licensed prescriber such as a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant.

- **Electronic nicotine-delivery system (ENDS)**– An electronic device that may be used to simulate smoking in the delivery of nicotine or other substance to a person inhaling from the device, and includes, but is not limited to, an electronic cigarette, electronic cigar, electronic cigarillo, electronic little cigars, electronic pipe, electronic hookah, e-liquids, e-liquid products, or any related device and any device and any cartridge or other component of such device.

Additional tobacco product examples include nicotine pouches such as Zyn, On!, and Velo.

SECTION III. TEXT

Use of tobacco product - No person(s) shall, at any time, use a tobacco product, including electronic nicotine-delivery systems, in any school building, on any school grounds, at any athletic event or any school sponsored event or in any school bus or other vehicle used for school purposes. Pursuant to RIGL § 23-20.9-5.

Possession of tobacco product - No student shall at any time possess any tobacco product or tobacco paraphernalia, including ENDS, in any school building, on any school grounds, at any athletic event or any school-sponsored event or in any school bus or other vehicle used for school purposes.

Confiscation - When there is evidence that a student is in possession of tobacco products or tobacco paraphernalia, including ENDS, administrators or other designated staff will confiscate such items.

Fair and equitable implementation – This policy, response and sanctions for alleged violations of policy will be administered fairly and equitably. Enforcement and sanctions shall be applied universally regardless of a student’s race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, primary language, academic standing, employment status, family income, zip code, participation in student athletics, the arts, student government, etc. The school will conduct periodic review regarding consistency of policy enforcement and sanctions with consideration towards known demographics.

Sanction Timeline – Ongoing use of tobacco products, including ENDS, can indicate addiction and may be triggered by social-emotional circumstances. It is important to intervene with responses that are aligned with student tobacco use at a point in time. This policy will reset at the beginning of each school year.

Tobacco industry promotions prohibited - No one on behalf of [the district] may solicit or accept any contributions, gifts or money from the tobacco industry to include, but not be limited to, donations, monies for sponsorships/scholarships, advertising, promotions, loans or support for equipment, uniforms and sports and/or training facilities. No one on behalf of [the district] may solicit or accept curricula or other educational materials of any kind that are created by or with input from the tobacco industry.

SECTION IV. SANCTIONS

First Violation:

- Confiscation and destruction of tobacco product and/or tobacco paraphernalia including **electronic nicotine-delivery systems or ENDS**, regardless of student age or parent consent.
 - RIGL § 23-20.9-5 prohibits use of tobacco products at schools, including ENDS.
 - View the EPA resource [How to dispose ENDS](#) for safe disposal guidance.
- Mandatory referral to in-school Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) for one (1) to three (3) sessions for screening, assessment, and motivational interviewing. The school will notify the parent/guardian that the student has been referred to the SAC.
 - The first session with the in-school SAC should occur within one (1) week of violation or next available opening and will last for no fewer than thirty (30) minutes. Future sessions will be at the discretion of the SAC.
 - In the case that the school does not currently have a SAC, the student will meet with a school social worker, psychologist, or similar support professional for a screening, assessment, and motivational interview.
- Completion of an Educational Program (timing of program at the discretion of Administrator)
 - **Educational Program Option #1** (*Evidence-based best practices*):
 - Student must complete [INDEPTH™](#) Alternative to Suspension program
 - Session 1: Getting the Facts: Breaks down the program for participants.
 - Session 2: Addiction: Explains the harmful effects of nicotine and tobacco products.
 - Session 3: Alternatives: Helps teens understand their urges and identify healthy alternatives to replace tobacco use.
 - Session 4: Past, Present, Future: Talks about next steps and how to avoid future tobacco-related problems.
 - **Educational Program Option #2:**
 - Review of information and complete two-page essay or ten-minute video on one of the following topics
 - Nicotine addiction and the developing brain.
 - Health problems associated with long term use of tobacco products, including ENDS.
 - Tobacco, nicotine and vaping as equity and social justice issues.
 - Essay must be graded by educator and graded at 75.0 numerical level.
 - Review and return to student until they meet academic criteria.
 - Essay must be completed within five school days of violation.
 - **Educational Program Option #3** (*Assess feasibility with local Prevention Coalition*):
 - Prevention retreat curated by prevention specialists.
 - Student required to attend a training on substance use prevention, mental health promotion, coping strategies, and will be responsible for taking a pre- and post-test to measure what they learned.
 - During this prevention retreat, the student must meet with school personnel to review the resources available to them.
 - **Educational Program Option #4** (*Evidence-based best practices*):
 - Healthy Futures by the Stanford REACH Lab is an alternative to suspension program for students using tobacco and nicotine on school campus. The nicotine version of Healthy Futures is available in 2 parts:

- **[My Healthy Futures](#)**: Is a 40–60-minute self-paced interactive course for students to complete on their own. Using motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy, the course helps students to identify their reasons for using, healthy ways to cope with stress, and shares quit resources for students to utilize.
 - **[Our Healthy Futures](#)**: Has a 2-hour or 4-hour version to choose from. Both can be completed individually or within a group setting and is facilitated by an educator. The 4-hour version builds upon the 2-hour version. It is recommended that Our Healthy Futures would follow My Healthy Future.
 - Educators will have free access to a data dashboard where they can view in real-time anonymous student survey responses. This dashboard offers the ability to gather and analyze data down to the individual school level.
- If the student does not comply, it would result in school sanctioned conduct response.
 - School sanctioned conduct response option:
 - *Student will write a reflection letter detailing how behavior may affect themselves such as nicotine's effect on their development and impact on others, acknowledging awareness for exposing them to secondhand smoke/vapor/aerosol.*

Second Violation:

- Confiscation and destruction of tobacco product and/or tobacco paraphernalia, including ENDS, regardless of student age or parent consent.
 - RIGL § 23-20.9-5 prohibits use of tobacco products at schools, including ENDS.
 - View the EPA resource [How to dispose ENDS](#) for safe disposal guidance.
- Mandatory referral to in-school Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) for three (3) to five (5) sessions for screening, assessment, and motivational interviewing. The school will notify the parent/guardian that the student has been referred to the SAC.
 - The first session with the in-school SAC should occur within one (1) week of violation or next available opening and should last for no fewer than thirty (30) minutes. Future sessions will be at the discretion of the SAC.
- School sanctioned conduct response and educational program at discretion of Administrator.
 - Educational program requirements
 - Identical to those outlined in first violation.
 - School sanctioned conduct response requirements.
 - Identical to those outlined in first violation.
 - Student is accompanied by parents/guardians to meeting with school administrators.
 - Discussion of openness to behavior change, support resources and potential future conduct responses with parent/guardian and student.

Third+ Violation:

- Confiscation and destruction of tobacco product and/or tobacco paraphernalia, including ENDS, regardless of student age or parent consent.
 - RIGL § 23-20.9-5 prohibits use of tobacco products at schools, including ENDS.
 - View the EPA resource [How to dispose ENDS](#) for safe disposal guidance.

- Mandatory referral to in-school Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) for three (3) to seven (7) sessions for screening, assessment, motivational interviewing, and referral to cessation/quit resources. The school will notify the parent/guardian that the student has been referred to the SAC.
 - The first session with the in-school SAC should occur within one (1) week of violation and should last for no fewer than thirty (30) minutes. Future sessions will be at the discretion of the SAC.
- School sanctioned conduct response and educational program at discretion of Administrator
 - Educational program requirements.
 - Identical to those outlined in second violation.
 - School sanctioned conduct response requirements.
 - Identical to those outlined in second violation.

SECTION V. ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement should be congruent with enforcement of any other alleged policy violation of the student handbook.

SECTION VI. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall take effect in full on [insert date] upon its passage.

Additional Resources:

Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health:

- [INDEPTH](#)™ is:
 - a convenient alternative to suspension or citation that helps schools and communities address the teen vaping problem in a more supportive way.
 - Instead of solely focusing on punitive measures, INDEPTH™ is an interactive program that teaches students about nicotine dependence, establishing healthy alternatives and how to kick the unhealthy addiction that got them in trouble in the first place.
- [INDEPTH](#)™ was piloted at 11 schools across the United States with 60 percent of student participants reporting that they were willing to quit using tobacco products after completing the program.
- [REGISTER](#) for our **FREE** online training today!

Conversation Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Family members

- [The Vape Talk](#) – an awareness campaign encouraging parents to talk to their kids about vaping before it's too late.

Additional Resources for Schools

- **Educational Resources:**
 - [Tobacco Free Rhode Island](#): Product specific education and school curricula
 - [American Lung Association](#): A variety of downloadable one-pagers are available in English and Spanish
 - [American Heart Association](#): How to Keep Kids and Teens from Smoking and Vaping
 - [Rhode Island Department of Health Tobacco Control Program](#)

- **Rhode Island Student Assistance Services (RISAS):** A 6-module, self-paced online program, developed for educators, Student Assistance Counselors, administrators, prevention specialists, and parents.
- **Quit Resource:**
 - My Life My Quit is free, confidential, and evidence-based help for youth ready to quit nicotine. This program offers trained tobacco treatment specialists, to provide real-time counseling by phone, text, or web-chat.
 - Phone – 855-891-9989
 - Text – “Start” to 36072
 - Chat – www.MyLifeMyQuit.com
 - Free promotional and educational resources for schools, parents, and healthcare providers are available online at www.MyLifeMyQuit.com or by contacting the Rhode Island Department of Health Tobacco Control Program’s Youth and Young Adults Coordinator: Jillian.Angell@health.ri.gov

District/school guidance: This policy was revised effective _____. This policy provides guidance for schools regarding tobacco and nicotine and should be complemented by a proactive school-wide education program. This model policy is intended for schools to use as is or with adjustments to sanctions as needed to best fit the needs of the district and their students.

