

Background



The Vermont Department of Health Tobacco Control Program has partnered with the Agency of Education since 2016 to support local high school chapters of Our Voices Xposed (OVX) and middle school chapters of Vermont Kids Against Tobacco (VKAT) helping to end tobacco's influence on youth.



Both OVX and VKAT, which may receive funding from local tobacco community coalitions, are based on the Positive Youth Development framework that recognizes the individual strengths of Vermont youth and provides supports to prepare young leaders. With the guidance of adult advisors and coalitions, OVX and VKAT youth work to educate their school peers, community members and local and state decision makers on the manipulative and deceptive marketing tactics tobacco and vape companies use to target youth with attractive, yet toxic, flavored products.

What OVX & VKAT Groups Do

- They play meaningful roles in improving the health of their communities.
- They educate on the tobacco and vape industries deceptive advertising and price discounting to hook new customers.
- They deliver the facts about the negative health effects and social consequences of smoking, vaping and nicotine use to increase awareness of and support for tobacco policies designed to protect youth.

Why our work matters

- Nicotine is harmful to developing brains; younger users are more likely to become addicted, have more difficulty quitting and may be at higher risk for addiction to other substances in the future.¹
- New and emerging flavored tobacco products that are not FDA-approved are flooding the market and accessible to youth.²
- Youth and young adults perceive flavored tobacco products as more appealing, better tasting and less harmful than non-flavored tobacco products. Flavors, especially sweet and fruit flavors, play a role in influencing tobacco use or experimentation in youth and young adults.³

- Among Vermont high school youth, the rate of current Electronic Vapor Product (EVP) use significantly increased from 15% in 2015 to 26% in 2019, as did lifetime EVP use (30% to 50%). Among students who currently use EVPs, daily use significantly increased from 9% in 2015 to 31% in 2019.

“Youth empowerment is about allowing youth a legitimate voice in the system. From meaningful participation by youth in their own litigation, to influencing local and national policy, youth empowerment is about providing for youth’s actual needs, not just adult conceptions of those needs.”

National Association of Counsel of Children

For More Information

For more information on OVX or VKAT, or assistance in starting a youth group in your community, please contact the Vermont Tobacco Control Program at tobaccovt@vermont.gov.



To Learn More

To learn more or to get involved in tobacco prevention in your community, visit Counterbalancevt.com.

¹ Nicotine and The Young Brain: <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/harmful-effects-tobacco/nicotine-and-young-brain>

² Flavored Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/emerging-tobacco-products/flavored-tobacco-use-among-youth-and-young-adults>

³ U.S. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS): <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>