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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor Hickenlooper Declares “Vape-Free November” in Response to Youth Vaping Epidemic

JCPH and Jeffco Public Schools working to reduce vaping among Jeffco Youth

Jefferson County, Colo. — Gov. John Hickenlooper was joined by medical experts and leaders from various Colorado health organizations on Nov. 2 to announce new efforts to address Colorado’s teen vaping crisis. The Governor launched “[Vape-Free November](#)”, a prevention initiative aimed at increasing awareness about the dangers of e-cigarettes and vaping. Hickenlooper signed an [executive order](#) directing state agencies to take action to limit the use of tobacco products, including vaping products, by youth. He also announced the release of [The Colorado Tobacco Prevention Blueprint](#), which provides policy recommendations to reduce the burden that tobacco and vaping place on the state.

The announcement comes as teen vaping reaches epidemic proportions in the state, with Colorado ranking highest in youth vape use in the country. According to the 2017 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS), [27 percent of Colorado youth currently vape](#), more than twice the national average of 13 percent reported by [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Jefferson County is far from immune from this crisis, as the HKCS indicates that 27 percent of youth in the county are current e-cigarette users, consistent with the state’s youth vaping rate.

Vape companies aggressively market their products towards youth, particularly with vape juice flavors like cotton candy, gummy bear and banana split. Youth often don’t even realize that the liquid they are vaping is not “harmless water vapor” — it contains nicotine, toxins, heavy metals and certain chemicals known to cause cancer. In fact, as explained in [CDPHE’s new health advisory on vaping](#), one pod of vape juice contains as much nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes. This makes vaping extremely addictive — particularly for the developing teenage brain.

Interim Chief Medical Officer at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Dr. Tista Ghosh, said on Friday, “When kids consume nicotine in any form, including nicotine in vape, their health and their brain development is at risk.” Data show that teens who vape are more susceptible to addiction and mood disorders, and are more likely to smoke cigars and cigarettes in the future. Dr. Ghosh also noted that Colorado data suggests vaping may be an indicator for other high risk behaviors such as binge drinking, using marijuana and misusing prescription pain medications.

“Vaping is not just a trend that will go away on its own. In response, our county Board of Health declared vaping a public health crisis in August 2018,” said Dr. Mark B. Johnson, Executive Director of Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH). “We are committed to working collaboratively with our community partners to tackle this issue strategically and effectively.”

To address the continuing rise in youth vaping, JCPH and Jeffco Public Schools are partnering to educate the district's administration and staff, parents, youth and community partners on the issue. As a part of these efforts, JCPH and Jeffco Public Schools cohosted a "Training of the Trainer" (TOT) in October 2018 to educate school staff around the issue of vaping and will host a TOT for parents later this month. Those who attend these trainings will be qualified to present on vaping to school staff and parent groups in the community.

Jeffco Public Schools also released a [video](#) from Superintendent Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., to communicate the serious nature of the youth vaping crisis to all district administration, staff, and the community. The video references the Tobacco-Free Schools Law, which prohibits the use of all tobacco products, including vaping, on school property.

Other efforts by Jeffco Public Schools to curtail vaping in schools include [students educating students](#), and thanks to a state grant, more staff to lead intervention efforts at high-risk schools. Learn more about the Jeffco BE Teams, groups of students at local high schools dedicated to the prevention of tobacco and nicotine use, visit <http://tobaccofreejeffco.com/youth/be-teams/>

"We have the power to change the environment that's created an epidemic of nicotine addiction among our kids, but none of us can reverse this course alone," Dr. Ghosh said. "Parents, schools, health care providers and policy makers all play a key role in ensuring that Colorado youth get the opportunity to start their lives healthy and free of addiction."

The good news is there are steps parents and adults can take right now to help address this crisis. Research shows that young people benefit from conversations with their parents and trusted adults. Listening, having fact-based conversations with teens and establishing a smoke/vapor-free rule at home can help prevent initiation and dispel the myth that vaping is harmless. For tips on starting the conversation with teens and fact sheets about vaping, visit www.tobaccofreejeffco.org/know-the-facts.

About Jefferson County Public Health

Public health is what we as a society do collectively to prevent illness and premature death and promote health in our neighborhoods and communities. Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH) is committed to promoting and protecting health across the lifespan through prevention, education and partnerships for all people. To learn more about JCPH, visit <https://www.jeffco.us/public-health>. You can also follow JCPH on Twitter [@JeffcoPH](#) and Facebook [@jeffcopublichealth](#). To learn more and get involved in local tobacco prevention efforts in Jefferson County, visit www.tobaccofreejeffco.com.

About Jeffco Public Schools

Jeffco Public Schools has been providing educational excellence for more than 65 years. The district serves over 86,000 students at 155 schools. Jeffco Public Schools is dedicated to changing the classroom experience through Readiness for Learning, Conditions for Learning, and Learning as outlined in the [Jeffco Generations strategic vision](#). Find [Jeffco Public Schools](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

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