



Addressing Tobacco Use in Montana Schools with Restorative Practices

With the onset of a teen vaping epidemic, Montana Schools continue to face new challenges around youth tobacco use; enforcing their school discipline policy is just one of them.

While zero tolerance was once considered a well measured approach to discipline, administrators are realizing it's not in the students' nor the schools' best interest to suspend a student for vaping.

Perhaps zero tolerance combined with a disciplinary action that includes positive and restorative measures will better address adolescent tobacco use in schools. Policy language promoting communication, education and a connection to resources can help students resist using tobacco and keep them engaged in school. Restorative measures like these support policy compliance as well as enforcement and will help maintain a positive school climate.

Adding Restorative Measures to School Discipline Policies Can Include:



Parent/Guardian Notification



Participation in a School or Community Service Project



Student Input on Resolution



Connection to Cessation Services



Support from Guidance Counselors, School Nurses, School Resource Officers or Prevention Specialists



Peer to Peer Engagement Opportunities



Compulsory Tobacco Education Programs

Montana Schools are Perfectly Positioned to Support Youth Tobacco Use Prevention

Schools are avoiding tobacco related student suspension by including restorative measures in their school discipline policies.

Why restorative measures work:



Parents have a big influence on their teen's decision to resist using drugs and alcohol. It's important parents are informed and included in a team effort to help their student resist using tobacco.



Students who have input on their disciplinary procedure may find it easier to take responsibility for their actions and work harder to prevent repeating them.



Connecting students to school supports creates a positive school climate and helps students resist behaviors that are not in their best interest.



Education is key to preventing and reducing youth tobacco use. Several research-based resources are available to schools, free of charge. OPI.MT.GOV/TOBACCOED has links to many.



Participating in school or community service can build a student's sense of pride, self-esteem and provide a connection to their school, their community, and supporting adults and peers.



Students must be aware of cessation resources - MY LIFE, MY QUIT and THE MONTANA TOBACCO QUITLINE are two examples of free cessation services. (Not as a disciplinary action, participation should be voluntary.)



Peer mentoring programs can be very effective within school districts. reACT is Montana's teen-led movement taking action to become the first-ever tobacco-free generation. Find out more at MTREACT.COM.

For more information:
www.opi.mt.gov/tobaccoed
406.444.0785



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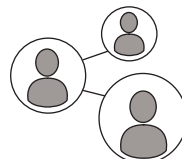
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