

MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: **Back to School Tobacco-Free**

As students head back to school, the Genesee County Health Department encourages parents and health care providers to talk to youth about tobacco use and to remind them that spit tobacco and e-cigarettes are not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes. In Michigan, 10.5% of high school students currently smoke cigarettes and 14.8% use e-cigarettes, rates higher than the national average. This creates 5,200 new, daily smokers under the age of eighteen for Michigan each year.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, the use of products containing nicotine in any form, including e-cigarettes, is unsafe for youth. Exposure to nicotine during periods of significant brain development, including adolescence, can disrupt the growth of brain circuits that control attention, learning, and can increase the susceptibility to addiction. Effects can be long-lasting and can include lower impulse control and mood disorders. Providing a tobacco-free example and home environment can help to protect kids from tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure.

“Although we have made significant progress in protecting our youth from tobacco-related health harms, we still have a long way to go,” stated John McKellar, Health Officer. “Far too many of our children are still using tobacco and are being exposed to the health harms caused by secondhand smoke. It is essential that we address e-cigarette use among young people, and do everything we can to prevent youth tobacco use.”

For information about quitting tobacco, the Michigan Tobacco Quitline provides services for all ages. Call the Quitline at 1-800-784-8669 or 1-800-QUIT-NOW and receive free telephone counseling to quit tobacco. In addition, the Quitline offers a free text messaging program and a self-guided online program to help youth quit. The Smokefree Teen website available at <http://teen.smokefree.gov/> provides tools targeted to help young people. A list of local tobacco cessation resources are available on the Genesee County Health Department website at <https://gchd.us/resources/smoking-cessation-resources/>

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