

WELCOME OVERVIEW LETTER

MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence and the Maine Prevention Services District Tobacco Prevention Partners thank you for joining our Sidekicks Training Team! In order to be an effective Sidekicks Adult Advisor, we wanted to provide you with Sidekicks program background as well offer an overview of the expectations of being a Sidekicks Adult Advisor.

Commercial tobacco use remains the leading cause of death and disease in this country with more than 480,000 deaths per year. Currently, nearly 9 out of 10 smokers started by age 18; among those youth who persist in smoking, one-third will die prematurely.

Why address youth commercial tobacco use?

- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine which causes addiction, may harm brain development, and could lead to continued commercial tobacco product use among youth.
- Youth who vape are 4x more likely to start smoking cigarettes.
- According to the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 7% of high schoolers smoke cigarettes and it's estimated that the commercial tobacco industry spends \$45.8 million in commercial tobacco marketing each year in Maine. Messages and images that make commercial tobacco use or vaping appealing are targeted directly toward youth.
- E-cigarette use among Maine youth has increased significantly since 2015. In 2015, 34% of Maine High Schoolers reported having ever used an e-cigarette; that number increased to 45% in 2019.
- Often, commercial tobacco, substance use, and mental health conditions go hand-in-hand. According to the 2015 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), nearly 50% of adolescents who felt 'sad or hopeless' also used commercial tobacco and nearly 40% of adolescents who had been 'bullied' also used commercial tobacco.

Once youth are trained as a Sidekick, they have the skills to hold respectful conversations with their peers about commercial tobacco use, as well as other risky behaviors. The Sidekicks program gives youth the skills and confidence to support their peers, as well as connects them to a network of Adult Advisors and Adult Ambassadors as a resource for questions and additional support.

Once you are trained as a Sidekicks Adult Advisor, MaineHealth (as part of Maine Prevention Services) will ask that you (or a representative of the organization you are representing as a Sidekick Advisor) sign the MaineHealth Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which provides a detailed description of the expectations of Sidekicks Adult Advisors.

Any questions regarding Sidekicks should be directed to MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence, via email at TobaccoPreventionServices@MaineHealth.org or via phone at (207) 661-7835.