

# WELCOME TO SIDEKICKS!

We are so happy that you have decided to become a Sidekick! Trained youth Sidekicks will be provided with ongoing support to be successful in holding respectful, helpful conversations around quitting with peers who use commercial tobacco or nicotine (vape) products.

It's a big deal to be a Sidekick because 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.

## **Here are some other reasons it's important to 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.

**Thank you for joining the Sidekicks team! We look forward to supporting you as you gain the skills and confidence to support your peers in talking about commercial tobacco use, vaping, as well as other risky behaviors.**

[\*\*WeAreSidekicks.org/Resources\*\*](https://www.maine.gov/health/tobacco-prevention-services)

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