

WELCOME TO SIDEKICKS!

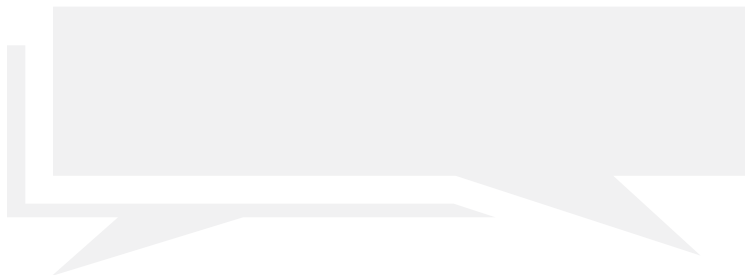
We are so happy that you have decided to become a Sidekick! Trained youth Sidekicks will be provided with the training and support needed to be successful in holding respectful, helpful conversations around quitting with peers who use commercial tobacco or nicotine (vape) products.

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.

Here are some other reasons it's important to address youth commercial tobacco use:

- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive, can interfere with healthy brain development, and can make it harder for youth to quit or avoid other commercial tobacco products.
- Youth who vape are more likely than their non-vaping peers to start using other nicotine and tobacco products, such as cigarettes, reinforcing patterns of long-term commercial tobacco use.
- The commercial tobacco industry invests heavily in marketing, including flavored products, social media content, and imagery that make vaping and smoking look appealing and normal, with strategies that disproportionately reach and influence young people.
- E-cigarette use among youth has become a major concern because products are easy to conceal, come in many flavors, and are widely perceived as less harmful than they really are, which can encourage experimentation and regular use.
- Commercial tobacco use, other substance use, and mental health challenges often occur together; youth who experience depression, anxiety, bullying, or chronic stress are at higher risk for using nicotine and other substances, and continued use can in turn worsen mental and physical health

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.WeAreSidekicks.org/Resources)

Any questions regarding Sidekicks should be directed to the Maine CDC Tobacco and Substance Use Prevention and Control Team via email at TSUP.DHHS@maine.gov