‘Be Smart, Don’t Start’ campaign urges Idaho youth to KNOW VAPE

Idaho Public Television has launched a social media campaign aimed at youth featuring dozens of Idaho teens and tweens stressing the harmful health effects of vaping and the importance of preventing the use of e-cigarettes. The campaign, Be Smart, Don’t Start, is part of IdahoPTVs KNOW VAPE campaign and will be shared widely across teen-centric social media channels.

“This campaign is focused on prevention because once a young person starts vaping it is very hard to stop,” explains KNOW VAPE executive producer Jennie Sue Weltner. “Just as importantly, we’re aiming for a culture shift in how Idaho youth view vapes: we hope kids will learn to equate vaping with harm.”

In Idaho, one in five teens has tried vaping. Lured by flavors and easy-to-disguise and -hide devices, kids get easily addicted to vaping due to the high levels of nicotine found in almost all vapes. Health care providers are warning that vaping damages the brains, bones and lungs of developing bodies. Children as young as 7 years old have had vape-related injuries in Idaho. In 2023, an under-18-year-old male underwent a double lung transplant in Idaho due to vaping.

The Be Smart, Don’t Start campaign combats the lies that vaping companies have marketed to kids by showcasing Idaho youth speaking out against vaping.

Kati Chauvin from Central District Health, one of Idaho’s seven public health districts, provides vaping prevention resources and presentations to schools throughout Ada County. She says that kids are influenced by their peers to start vaping, but can also be influenced by them to stop.
“We found that most high schoolers started using e-cigarettes because their ‘friends use them’ and about half of middle schoolers started to use them because they ‘were curious,’” explains Chauvin. “Having a campaign that talks directly to kids, peer-to-peer, is important specifically for this reason. As we work to catch up with the diligent and deceptive marketing by Big Vape companies, a peer-to-peer campaign will most certainly lead us in the direction we want to go, which is changing the way e-cigarettes are viewed.”

“Kids need to see young leaders choosing not to vape, and they need to know the real dangers of vaping in order to change the current perspectives as a result of years of vape companies marketing to our children,” says Weltner. “The kids emphasize that, despite what vape companies say, vaping isn’t cool, it’s dangerous and dumb.”

Several of the ads are inspired by the student contest winners from the 2023 KNOW VAPE teen video contest. The current campaign is collaborating with students throughout the production who are consultants and talent.

“We know Idaho kids are smart,” says Weltner. “If they’re armed with the facts about the dangers of youth vaping and the predatory practices of vape manufacturers, we think they will choose not to vape.”

The KNOW VAPE campaign launched in 2022 with funding from Idaho’s Millennium Fund and in partnership with Idaho’s seven public health districts, and is a statewide campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of youth vaping in Idaho. The campaign includes a documentary called Nic Sick: The Dangers of Youth Vaping; free online resources for parents, teens and tweens; standards-based curriculum for educators; a video contest for teens: and the Be Smart, Don’t Start social media campaign.

What are vapes?
Vapes are a form of electronic cigarettes that use a battery to heat a liquid solution to a high temperature, producing an aerosol that is inhaled. Vapes originated in China. Most vapes contain large amounts of nicotine and other cancer-causing chemicals and metals. Health experts say that vaping causes brain, lung and bone damage in developing bodies. The rapid rise of teen vaping is correlated with the launch in 2015 of US-made vape JUUL. In September 2022, JUUL was ordered to pay $438.5 million to 34 states and territories, including Idaho, for illegally marketing their product to children. Vaping under the age of 21 is illegal in Idaho.

Nic Sick documentary will air February 12
The documentary Nic Sick: The Dangers of Youth Vaping will air on Idaho Public Television on Monday, February 12, at 8 PM. Nic Sick follows Idaho teens as they talk
with heartbreaking authenticity about how and why they started vaping and the consequences that followed. Health, science and law-enforcement experts, Idaho parents, and vaping prevention and cessation counselors are also featured.

**Anti-vape video contest for teens open now**
The KNOW VAPE anti-vape video contest is for Idaho 13-to-18-year-olds. Teen creators produce an anti-vaping video, no longer than 90 seconds, for a chance to win more than $10,000 in cash prizes. Winning videos will be shared statewide. Find out more at [IdahoPTV.org/knowvape](http://IdahoPTV.org/knowvape).

**Anti-vape professional development for Idaho educators**
Idaho Public Television will present a three-part virtual professional development series for educators on the dangers of vaping. Participants will learn about the damage caused from vaping and the connection between vaping and mental health. Attendees will learn how they can help students avoid vaping, and will walk away with a wealth of resources they can use in their classroom. Webinars will be held from 5:30-7:30 PM Mountain time on January 24, February 28, and March 27. Sign up at [idahoptv.org/education/educators/professional-development/#vape](http://idahoptv.org/education/educators/professional-development/#vape).

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