

THE INITIATIVE

Addressing Substance Use in Dare County



Winter 2020
Vol. 04 Issue 01



A Viewpoint on Vaping

This article was written by David Langille, MD, FACEP, one of Right Path Treatment Center's founding members. Langille is a full-time Physician specializing in Addiction Medicine and helping patients regain their health and lives through the process of recovery.

Since their introduction to the consumer market around 2003, use of e-cigarettes (vaping) has grown exponentially. Big Tobacco has aggressively marketed their use and government oversight has been very limited. The FDA has stated that they will not get involved in the market until August 2021. This translates into no federal review of public health impact. This delay is unwise and unsafe.

Between 2017-2018, vaping by high school students in the US increased by 78%. Vaping has become an issue of epidemic proportions. JUUL, the leading manufacturer, has increased the nicotine content of vaping fluids (solutions) and is also marketing flavors that are more attractive to younger folks. Many states, including North Carolina, have filed suit against the industry, but the cases are pending, and sales continue.

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SAVING LIVES TASK FORCE

The Initiative is a quarterly newsletter presented by the Saving Lives Task Force, the goal of this publication is to educate, inform and engage residents of Dare County.

- **Our Task Force is**
a team of professionals and community members working toward the prevention of substance use disorders and the availability of effective treatment for all Dare county citizens in need of help.
- **Join us for our Meetings**
on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 3:00 pm at the Dare County Administration Building in Manteo.
- **For More Information**
please contact Roxana Ballinger, Saving Lives Task Force Co-Chair, at 252.475.5619 or roxana.ballinger@darenc.com.

savinglivesobx.com
facebook.com/savinglivesobx



Ongoing Events

- Alcoholics Anonymous - District 93 | 3rd Wednesday of each month | 7:00 pm Grace By The Sea Lutheran Church**
4212 S Croatan Hwy., Nags Head, NC 27959
Outer Banks AA Hotline: 252.256.0850
www.aaobx.com
- NAR-ANON | Every Thursday | 7:00 pm 111 W. Carlton Avenue in Kill Devil Hills**
The NAR-ANON program is a means of coping with the insanity brought about from having a family member or friend struggling with addiction. For more details, please contact Debbie at 703.402.3501.
- Outer Banks Alateen | Every Saturday 10:00 am | Kitty Hawk Baptist Church**
Alateen is a fellowship of young people whose lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or friend. For more details, please email alateen@alanonobx.com.
- Breaking Through Task Force | 2nd Tuesday of the Month | 8:30 - 10:00 am Kill Devil Hills Town Hall**
The Breaking Through Task Force’s mission is to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health issues. For more information, please email info@breakthestigmaobx.com
- Dare Community Collaborative 2nd Tuesday of the Month | 1:30 - 2:30 pm | Dare County Administrative Building**
The Dare Collaborative is a partnership among providers and families of youth and adults with mental health or substance use issues. Together, they identify services, support needs and try to find ways to meet those needs. For more information, please contact Keith at keith.letchworth@trilliumnc.org.

February

- Escape A Vape | 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm February 4 | Cape Hatteras Secondary February 5 | First Flight Middle February 6 | Manteo Middle**
Escape A Vape will feature Luka Kinard, a North Carolina teen who became addicted to vaping. Luka was sent to a rehabilitation program after having a seizure due to vaping. Luka now shares his experience with the nation and has been featured on Today, NBC News, Wall Street Journal, and Inside Edition. This event is for youth and adults. Each event will have giveaways, food, and prizes. Registration is encouraged but not required. Visit darenc.com/EscapeAVape for more information or to register to attend the event.

March

- Medication-Assisted Treatment Townhall March 11 | 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm The Dare Center (Manteo)**
Join us to learn about the benefits of Medication-Assisted Treatment. Refreshments will be served. Call 252.475.5619 for more information.



The electronic cigarette epidemic has hit the youth population particularly hard. While the use of traditional cigarettes has declined in youth populations, the use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are rising at alarming levels. The Dare County Department of Health and Human Services is committed to providing education, prevention and intervention services to mitigate the harmful effects of e-cigarette use by our youngest community members.

The Peer Power Program is instrumental in educating youth about the dangers of e-cigarette use. Public Health Education Specialists, Brandie Fitzgerald and Chris Fletcher facilitate a class within Dare County high schools where youth learn a multitude of health education topics including the harmful effects of e-cigarette use. In return, Peer Power students then teach middle and elementary school students what they have learned with a focus on how to refuse the product if they are asked to use.

Like other substance use, prevention is key. The nicotine concentration is high in many e-cigarettes. Thus, youth addiction to e-cigarettes is common. While many

think simply disposing of the e-cigarette is the end, often it is the beginning. Many people, including youth are finding they need intervention services to successfully end e-cigarette use.

In response to this challenge that our youth are facing, Fletcher recently earned her certification as a Tobacco Treatment Specialist. This certification qualifies Fletcher to provide cessation services for tobacco use. She can work with individuals and/or groups to help them identify triggers, assist with motivation to quit, and help them develop additional skills that are important in the cessation journey.

Fletcher is currently providing her services at Cape Hatteras Secondary School. In addition to providing services for smoking cessation, she is also working to provide the “Catch my Breath” curriculum to students as part of the prevention and intervention program. This curriculum contains lessons to discourage youth e-cigarette use.

Together, we are working to make Dare County youth e-cigarette free.

A Viewpoint on Vaping

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It is hard to argue, given the facts, that vaping is equally or more dangerous than traditional tobacco smoke. However, the true long-term risks remain unknown due to the fact that vaping is a relatively new phenomenon. Recent peer-reviewed scientific studies have found that submicroscopic particles produced by some vape solutions contain heavy metals, formaldehyde (embalming fluid) and other carcinogens. There exists no hard data on safety issues or long-term health consequences. Many national health organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Cancer Society, The American Heart Association and The American Lung Association have spoken out against the use of e-cigarettes and vaping. The underlying concern is that vaping can lead to use of traditional tobacco products. This is in part because vaping has somewhat destigmatized tobacco smoking. Young people who vape are far more likely to smoke tobacco. This fact contrasts with the vape industry’s argument that their products function as de facto cigarette cessation methods. Anecdotal examples of success stories abound, but one must question whether big tobacco is duping us once again.

Public health authorities are beginning to fear that vaping will initiate another generation to a life of nicotine addiction. Young people, by nature, are more likely to experiment with these products and to accept unknown risks to their health. Clearly the FDA needs to do much more to protect both young and old from this epidemic.

There are two sides to this argument. Proponents cite some weak evidence that vaping may lower tobacco related deaths and disease while opponents cite the reality that there are too many unknowns to declare its safety.

The primary ingredients contained in most vape fluids include propylene glycol, nicotine, and vegetable glycerin. Some brands are manufactured in low-quality lab environments and may contain unknown ingredients. Are the various toxins, heavy metals, and known carcinogens, that have been found in certain brands, knowingly (or unknowingly) added to the manufacturers’ recipes, or are these toxins created as a by-product of the vaporization process?

We do not know, due to the lack of federal oversight.

The FDA has created a vacuum of information regarding the use and safety of these devices and vaping in general by choosing to remain on the sidelines of this issue. There are many epidemiologic facts concerning vaping but the most important are that vaping is epidemic, use is increasing, and the industry is nearly unregulated. We have a huge deficiency in knowledge regarding the risks (or safety) of these products.

The growth of vaping has been astonishing. Since the introduction of these devices, worldwide sales grew to \$ 7 billion dollars in 2014, and popularity has exploded since then. True figures are difficult to come by from the industry itself. Currently, about ¾ of high school seniors have vaped. Vaping is most popular in the 18 to 24 age demographic, but all ages use them.

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Saving Lives Task Force Advocacy: The Opioid Response Act

Governor Roy Cooper signed House Bill 325, the Opioid Epidemic Response Act, to help increase access to medication-assisted treatment and expand harm reduction measures to reduce opioid overdose deaths across the state. Gov. Cooper was joined by lawmakers from both parties and families affected by the substance abuse crisis.

The bill garnered widespread support from the General Assembly led by Senator Jim Davis and Senator Gladys A. Robinson.

The Opioid Epidemic Response Act will:

Increase access to office-based opioid treatment (OBOT) for opioid use disorder: Remove duplicative state registration of buprenorphine prescribers that NC doctors widely cite as a barrier to prescribing medication-assisted treatment in the office-based setting.

Save lives by allowing people to test drugs for dangerous contaminants like fentanyl before they use them: Decriminalize the use of paraphernalia designed to test the strength or purity of drugs, such as fentanyl test strips.

Improve the ability of syringe exchange programs to prevent the costly spread of disease: Remove the ban on using state funds to purchase supplies for syringe exchange programs.

"This new law takes important steps to reduce harm and help doctors treat substance abuse disorder patients, and I appreciate the bipartisan effort to get this bill passed," said Governor Cooper. "We know that improving access

to care is a proven strategy to prevent more opioid deaths, and we need to expand Medicaid to help get more people health care coverage."

From 1999-2017, more than 13,000 North Carolinians lost their lives to unintentional opioid overdose. Turning the tide of the opioid crisis is one of Governor Roy Cooper's primary goals. Since the launch of the Opioid Action Plan in 2017, opioid dispensing has decreased by 24% and North Carolina has seen the first major decline in emergency department visits.

In North Carolina, half of all people who received emergency hospital care last year with an opioid overdose were uninsured. Medicaid covers a wide range of treatments for individuals with opioid use disorder, including inpatient/outpatient treatment, rehabilitation and medication-assisted treatment. Individuals with opioid use disorder who have access to affordable health care through Medicaid are twice as likely as the uninsured to receive treatment.

"Expanding Medicaid is a proven strategy to turn the tide on the opioid crisis," said DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen. "It is a critical tool that we need to add to our arsenal to respond to this crisis."

THE INITIATIVE Resources:

savinglivesobx.com

PORT Health

2808 S Croatan Hwy.
Nags Head, NC 27959
252.441.2324

Trillium Health Resources

www.trilliumncaccesspoint.org
877.685.2415 – 24 Hours a Day

Mobile Crisis Team

24 Hours a Day / 7 Days a Week
866.437.1821

2-1-1 Directory

www.nc211.org

Highlife 252

Syringe Exchange Program
252.457.7242

Contact your insurance company to find out more information on local providers and your plan's benefits.