

## Don't Let Kids Be Tricked by Tobacco

*Candy-flavored products introduce hundreds of Oklahoma children to tobacco and vape each year*

**OKLAHOMA CITY** (October 20, 2021) –This Halloween, the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) is reminding parents, teachers, health care providers and community leaders about the dangers of flavored tobacco and vaping products disguised to mimic candy and other treats.

“Flavorings make it easier to start using tobacco or vape products,” said TSET Executive Director Julie Bisbee. “The staggering use of flavored tobacco products by youth threatens to reverse more than 20 years of gains made in tobacco prevention. Now a new generation of Oklahomans stand to suffer a lifetime of addiction and poor health as the tobacco industry profits.”

Research shows that flavored tobacco products have played a major role in the increase of tobacco use among youth, particularly e-cigarettes. Four out of 5 kids who have used tobacco started with a flavored product, whether traditional cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes or nicotine-only products, which are gaining in popularity.

Nearly 31% of Oklahoma high school youth reported currently using one or more tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, according to the most recent data available. The CDC has stated that no tobacco use is safe for youth. Nicotine addiction affects the brain, which continues to develop until age 25. The younger a person is when they start using tobacco, the higher their risk of addiction and premature death.

Although federal law prohibits selling cigarettes with candy and fruit flavors, other tobacco products like little cigars, hookah, smokeless tobacco, and e-cigarettes -- also known as vapes -- are exempt. These products come in a variety of flavors, including bubble gum, candy and fruit. Menthol, a popular flavor among youth, is also exempt from the flavor ban and is still found in cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and vape products.

Brightly-colored packaging, enticing names and discreet designs also help vapor products appeal to youth and allow the device to be hidden in plain sight, making them all trick and no treat for parents and caregivers.

To help protect children from the harms of tobacco products, TSET programs provide a variety of free resources, including fact sheets, posters, [conversation guide for parents](#) and teacher [lesson plans](#).

The [TSET Healthy Youth Initiative](#) and [Tobacco Stops With Me](#) (TSWM) focus on youth tobacco prevention and reduction. Educational messaging from the TSET Healthy Youth Initiative helps youth 13-18 understand the dangers of tobacco and how it harms their bodies through the Behind the Haze and Down and Dirty campaigns. The initiative is also comprised of a youth tobacco and vape quit program called [My Life, My Quit](#), which provides free text-based quit

coaching to youth designed specifically for them. Parents can learn more about the initiative at [TSEHealthyYouth.com](https://TSEHealthyYouth.com).

TSWM's Protect Our Youth campaign gives parents and other adult influences the tools they need to guide youth to live tobacco free, plus learn what they can do to protect children from tobacco on a policy level. Learn to spot [the signs of vaping](#), get [tips](#) to talk tobacco with your kids, discover [myth-busting information](#) to set the record straight about youth vaping and more.

Tobacco prevention materials from My Life, My Quit, Tobacco Stops With Me and other TSET programs are available free to order or download at [TSET.OK.GOV/order](https://TSET.OK.GOV/order).

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**The TSET Healthy Youth Initiative** empowers Oklahoma youth to improve health outcomes for themselves and future generations. Phase 1 of the initiative, launched in 2020, promotes healthy lifestyle choices for teens and gives parents resources to support their children in maintaining or developing healthy habits for a lifetime. Phase 2 consists of a statewide youth advocacy and education program known as the [Youth Action for Health Leadership](#) (Y AHL). Visit [TSEHealthyYouth.com](https://TSEHealthyYouth.com) to learn more about these programs designed for Oklahoma youth.

[Tobacco Stops With Me](#) is a statewide campaign, funded through the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Trust, that provides an efficient, emotional and highly recognizable tobacco-free message for Oklahomans to rally around. By educating the public about the negative effects and impact of tobacco, the goal of Tobacco Stops With Me is to prevent and reduce tobacco use, and improve the health and quality of life of every Oklahoman. Tobacco Stops With Me aims to inspire individuals to make positive changes — not only for their own health, but for the health of the entire state as well.

**My Life, My Quit** is a free program to help Oklahoma teens, ages 13-17, quit tobacco, including e-cigarettes. Offering tools most utilized by teens, free live texting, web chat and phone calls, My Life, My Quit supports teens through the steps of quitting tobacco to be able to live tobacco free. Funded by the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET), these free services for Oklahoma teens are at [MyLifeMyQuit.com](https://MyLifeMyQuit.com) or text "Start My Quit" to 36072.

The **Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET)** serves as a partner and bridge builder for organizations working toward shaping a healthier future for all Oklahomans. TSET provides leadership at the intersections of health by working across the state, by cultivating innovative and life-changing research, and by working across public and private sectors to develop, support, implement and evaluate creative strategies to take advantage of emerging opportunities to improve the public's health. To learn more, visit [TSET.ok.gov](https://TSET.ok.gov).

***TSET – Better Lives Through Better Health***

