



Paul A. Pettit, MSL, CPH
Public Health Director

**GENESEE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
3837 West Main Street Rd.
Batavia, NY 14020
(585) 344-2580 x5555

**ORLEANS COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
14016 State Route 31, Suite 101
Albion, NY 14411
(585) 589-3278

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Kaitlin Pettine, MPH, MCHES

Director of Health Promotion/Public Information Officer

Kaitlin.Pettine@co.genesee.ny.us

Paul Pettit, MSL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vaping: An Epidemic among Youth

Back to school should mean new opportunities, not new addictions. As students return to the classroom this fall, educators and parents are not only preparing for a new academic year, but also the rising public health concern of vaping. E-cigarettes can come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and in a school setting, these devices may blend in with other school supplies, as they may look like pens, USB drives, and even phone cases. This makes identifying these devices and protecting youth that much more difficult.

Studies show that vaping has become a rising concern in middle school aged children, as 3 percent of seventh graders in both Genesee and Orleans Counties reported vaping with nicotine. “These years of a child’s life are very sensitive because their brains are still developing,” stated Paul Pettit, Public Health Director for Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health). “As the rate of vaping rises among teens, we must equip families and kids with information and tools to stay healthy.”

There are several reasons why youth vape:

- Tobacco advertisers use vibrant colors and fun marketing strategies to increase youth participation in vaping. These ads are shown on social media, television, and streaming services, and promote vaping as a cheaper alternative to other tobacco products.
- Peer pressure and social influences during middle and high school are a main contributor to students trying an e-cigarette for the first time. Students report that they may be curious to try vaping from seeing a friend or family member use them.
- Availability of flavored e-cigarette products including youth-friendly flavors such as candy, fruit, mint, and menthol are the most widely used types of e-cigarettes among youth. According to the CLYDE Survey conducted by UConnectCare (formally GCASA), about 20% of 11th graders in Genesee and Orleans Counties reported using E-cigarettes or vapes that contain nicotine in 2022.

- Nicotine is in most e-cigarettes and is highly addictive. Those who use vapes containing nicotine may experience cravings and urges to smoke, difficulty sleeping, and the feeling of anxiety and sadness, which may make them believe they need nicotine to relieve these feelings. These behaviors, among others, are a part of nicotine addiction.

The good news is that studies show that most middle and high school students who vape want to quit. Becoming more aware of the risks of vaping will allow for educated conversations with youth and help ensure that all youth can live healthy, tobacco-free lives.

Here are a few ways you can protect your youth and promote rejection of vaping during back to school season.

- Educate yourself on the subject, and become a credible source of information. Visit [CDC.gov/Vaping](https://www.cdc.gov/Vaping) for important information on youth vaping.
- Create a safe space for discussion and start the conversation on vaping. Remember to be patient, listen, and avoid criticism. Keep the conversation open and be willing to be flexible.
- Answer their questions and be prepared. Kids may have questions about vaping, visit [CDC.gov/tobacco](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco) for ideas on how to give educated and meaningful answers

Get Help Today

If you are interested in quitting, or someone you know needs help quitting, help is available:

- Visit the [New York State Smokers' Quitline](https://www.ny.gov/new-york-state-smokers-quitline) for quit-smoking and quit-vaping programs, or call 866-NY-QUITS (866-697-8487), to apply for a free starter kit of nicotine medications and to talk to a quit coach.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about medications and counseling to help you manage cravings. Most health insurance plans, including Medicaid, cover services to help you quit.

For more information about GO Health Programs and services, visit [GOHealthNY.org](https://www.gohealthny.org) or contact your local health department at

- Genesee County: 585-344-2580 ext. 5555
- Orleans County: 585-589-3278

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