

Unregulated disposable vapes have become increasingly popular with young people. While there are health benefits for adult smokers who switch to prescribed nicotine vapes, this is not the case for young people who are non-smokers. Unregulated disposable vapes are frequently mislabelled as nicotine free despite often containing nicotine.

Schools play a key role in helping young people to stay safe and to make healthy decisions. This factsheet provides an overview of existing evidence-based responses to alcohol and other drugs through a “whole school approach”.

## What can schools do?



### Review School alcohol and other drug (AOD) policy

Align school policies, practices and programs so that the response to AOD issues is holistic. While vaping is a new phenomenon, we should use the same principles that we use to respond to other substance issues.



### Include vaping into existing universal school alcohol and other drug education

Vaping and tobacco information should be delivered together. The message should be that none of these products are for young people.



### Keep young people engaged in school

Disengagement from school increases risk of developing a substance use problem. Overly punitive responses risk student disengagement. Develop sustainable behavioural responses, involve families and the whole school community in the response.



### Support young people who are nicotine dependent

Young people who are nicotine dependent may have poor control over their vaping, and vape in places where vaping is not allowed. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms include difficulty concentrating, irritability, restlessness. Discuss withdrawal support options with young people who may be nicotine dependent.



### Engage families in the response

Ensure families are involved in the schools' responses to vaping. Encourage families to include vaping in their own conversations about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use with young people.



### Report retailers who break the law

Vapes are smoking products under Queensland law and subject to the same restrictions as tobacco products. Retailers cannot sell vapes to young people under 18. It is illegal to sell vapes that contain nicotine without a prescription. To report retailers illegally supplying vapes call 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

## What should be avoided?

### One-off “special” presentations

One-off presentations can leave students with the impression that vaping is more common than it really is, which can increase their intentions to try it. Instead, incorporate vaping into existing, ongoing curriculum-based school AOD education.

### Use of external presenters

Research on the use of external presenters is inconsistent. Evidence suggests that regular classroom teachers are the most effective at delivering school AOD education. Teachers need training and support to deliver this effectively.

### Fear or scare tactics

Fear or scare tactics that over-emphasize or exaggerate harms are not just ineffective, they damage our credibility. Young people stop listening to us. It's better to provide balanced, factual information with a focus on harms that are genuinely likely to be experienced young people.

Dovetail has a best practice guide “Alcohol and other drugs in schools” that includes a set of tools to enhance a school’s response to alcohol and other drugs. To order a free print copy or download an electronic copy go to [www.dovetail.org.au](http://www.dovetail.org.au)

For further information and support in responding to vaping, contact Dovetail on (07) 3837 5621 or [info@dovetail.org.au](mailto:info@dovetail.org.au)

