



# SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

## Press Release

### New Campaign Targets Tobacco Industry's Deceptive Marketing to Youth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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Sam Perez, Public Information Officer

San Benito County - In an effort to combat the tobacco industry's latest marketing strategies aimed at getting youth hooked on nicotine, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) today launched a new "Flavors Hook Kids" campaign.

This campaign warns parents and concerned adults about the increasing availability of flavored tobacco products targeted to teens. The campaign also highlights how easy it is for kids to purchase flavored tobacco products online.

"E-cigarettes and flavored tobacco products are appealing to youth and, although smoking flavored tobacco products such as Cotton Candy and Unicorn Poop may seem fun, these products are harmful and can lead to a lifetime of nicotine addiction," stated Dr. Gail Newel, Health Officer for San Benito County.

Locally, Public Health Services staff and youth, along with parents and educators, packed the Hollister City Council meeting on April 16, 2018 to encourage council members to pass a policy limiting the sale of e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco products to only retail establishments that allow customers 21 and over.

"Tobacco is seen by teenagers as harmless and a way to look 'cool'. It is crazy to me to see how tobacco is affecting the lives of many young people," stated Vanessa Sanchez, sophomore at San Benito High School. "As a student at San Benito High School I have encountered classmates vaping in Baler Alley, in the bathrooms and walking home. Tobacco is so accessible to us and nothing is being done about this problem in our community."

More than 80 percent of youth who have tried tobacco products started with a flavored product. There are currently more than 15,500 e-cigarette flavors on the market.

Also increasing in popularity among teenagers are new e-cigarette devices called "pod mods." One in particular, JUUL, looks like a flash drive. It is easily hidden from parents and teachers because of its deceptive design. Each JUUL cartridge contains the same amount of nicotine as an entire pack of traditional

cigarettes.

"We encourage parents to talk to their kids about the significant risks of nicotine addiction and tobacco use – which can impact brain development and cause asthma and respiratory disease," stated Dr. Newel. "There's simply no safe level of tobacco consumption, and it is far too easy for teens to get interested and hooked due to the tobacco industry's deceptive tactics."

E-cigarettes are the most common tobacco product used by youth in the U.S. In 2016, 13.6 percent of California high school students reported using tobacco products, compared to 14.8 in San Benito County and more than half (8.6 percent) reporting using e-cigarettes, including "pod mods." Research has shown minors can successfully buy e-cigarette products online 94 percent of the time.

For more information on e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco products please call Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367, go to San Benito Public Health Services website <http://hhsa.cosb.us/publichealth/>, or the California Tobacco Control website at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CTCB/Pages/FlavoredTobaccoAndMenthol.aspx>

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