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## TESTIMONY

**Testimony To:** House Committee on Human Services  
**Respectfully Submitted by:** Meg Porcella on behalf of Beth Keister  
**Subject:** Resources for Schools on Vaping  
**Date:** January 19, 2023

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I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Beth Keister who coordinates the AOE's Tobacco and Substance Abuse grant.

### Background

Vaping and other substance use issues are complex and challenging and best addressed holistically by promoting protective factors and reducing risk factors. Examples include enhancing social-emotional learning, family engagement, afterschool programs, and more. Many AOE grants support such programs and initiatives, even if the funds or activities are not vaping-specific. For example, some LEAs have planned to hire Student Assistance Professionals (SAPs have a focus on substance prevention) or mental health clinicians with other grant funds.

### School-Level

- Health education

16 V.S.A. § 131 states that "the study of drugs, including education about alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and prescribed drugs" is to be included in health education and 16 V.S.A. § 906 also states that health education should include study on "the effects of tobacco, alcoholic drinks, and drugs on the human system and on society".

AOE is always available to assist schools in identifying vaping- or other drug-specific curricula, as well as general health education curricula. We have also been working on tools to help increase awareness and understanding of issues like vaping by drawing connections to other content areas (for example, science).

- Tiered supports to those at risk of or already vaping (for example, cessation supports).



## **Funding Sources**

The AOE oversees the Nicotine and Substance Use Prevention Grant (funded by 1999 tobacco settlement funds) which currently supports 13 LEAs in the strategy areas of:

- curriculum (including education about vaping)
- school health policy
- vaping/nicotine cessation
- youth engagement (most grantees participate in the Department of Health Tobacco Control's Our Voices Xposed (OVX) and Vermont Kids Against Tobacco (VKAT) youth anti-tobacco advocacy groups) and
- family engagement initiatives pertaining to nicotine and other substance prevention.

As part of this grant, we also contract with strategy experts who provide technical assistance directly to grantees on all of these strategy areas. Through that contract we have also offered webinars for the field on relevant topics.

The Department of Health Tobacco Control, who oversees the OVX/VKAT groups previously mentioned, and DSU (Department of Substance Use Programs) also have various grant programs that support vaping and/or substance prevention; some grants go to LEAs and others go to community prevention coalitions that can help support schools. We work closely with them.

## **Grant Outcomes**

All of the AOE grantees showed a decrease on the 2021 YRBS in both lifetime EVP (electronic vapor device) usage as well as 30-day EVP usage at the high school level compared to 2019.