



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Anya Armes Weber

502-564-3703 ext. 3800

Beth Fisher

502-782-0032

**Free Text Service to Help Young Kentuckians Quit
Vaping**

Service Touted as New Federal Law Impacting Tobacco Sales Takes Effect

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 9, 2020) – The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), encourages teens and young adults who want to quit vaping to get free help from This Is Quitting, a nationwide texting service. CHFS and DPH officials say cessation services such as This Is Quitting are critical for young people and emphasized that many will be impacted by the recent federal law increasing the legal age to purchase tobacco and vaping products to 21.

This is Quitting was developed by Truth Initiative and is being promoted directly to Kentuckians through a collaboration with DPH. The service is intended for young people ages 13 to 24, and is tailored by age group to give appropriate recommendations about quitting vaping. It was developed with input from young people who have already attempted to or succeeded in quitting e-cigarettes. Participants should text KENTUCKY to 88709 to enroll in the program, which provides up to nine weeks of coaching.

CHFS Acting Secretary Eric Friedlander said quitting tobacco, nicotine, or vaping products will improve your health at any age, and with the resources offered through DPH and other providers, it takes just a few steps to be on the path toward quitting.

“In light of a recent federal law increasing the age of legal tobacco sales to 21, we know many young people will need support giving up tobacco and e-cigarette products,” he said. “This Is Quitting is a great resource specifically created to help young people quit using e-cigarettes and we are very happy to partner with the Truth Initiative to help more young Kentuckians lead healthier lives.

“Many young people who started vaping now want to quit, but they don’t know how,” said Dr. Amanda Graham, Chief of Innovations at Truth Initiative. “The fact that young people are setting a quit date the day they enroll shows that they are eager to break free from vaping. Our program allows them to get support discreetly and anonymously without having to disclose to an adult that they are vaping.”

Young people who enroll in This is Quitting will receive one support text per day leading up to the day they quit vaping, and for at least 60 days after their ‘quit date.’ For those not ready to commit to quitting but who are still interested in learning more, This is Quitting will send at least four weeks of messages focused on building skills and confidence to prepare for quitting. In addition to their scheduled messages, participants can also receive on-demand support for cravings, stress, and set-backs in their quitting journey.

According to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, more than 53 percent of Kentucky’s high schoolers have ever used an e-cigarette. More than half of those students are current users. By comparison, around 30 percent of Kentucky high schoolers have ever smoked a traditional cigarette, and approximately 9 percent are current smokers.

“E-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among Kentucky youth,” said DPH Health Promotion Section Supervisor Elizabeth Anderson-Hoagland. “While we absolutely do not want any teen to start vaping, we also want to make sure we’re providing resources to help them quit.”

Quitting vaping can be challenging because almost all e-cigarettes contain nicotine, the same addictive chemical found in cigarettes and other tobacco products. One JUUL pod contains as much nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes. A 2018 Truth Initiative study found that 63 percent of youth and young adult JUUL-users did not know that the product always contains nicotine.

This is Quitting and DPH's other free tobacco-cessation resources like My Life, My Quit and Quit Now Kentucky are especially important for teens and young adults, for whom nicotine is particularly detrimental. The U.S. Surgeon General has reported that nicotine exposure is particularly dangerous in adolescents because it can "prime the brain for addiction to other drugs such as cocaine."

This is Quitting also comes alongside DPH and the CDC's investigation into the nationwide outbreak of e-cigarette or vaping product use associated lung injury (EVALI). More than 2,400 people across the country have been hospitalized with serious respiratory issues as a result of using e-cigarettes, though the exact cause of their injuries remains unknown. More than 50 patients have died as a result of this outbreak. Many of those affected are young people, probably because they are more likely to vape than other age groups.

DPH provides updated EVALI information at <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dmch/hpb/Pages/pdinfo.aspx>.

Truth Initiative launched This is Quitting nationwide in January 2019 and has since enrolled over 70,000 teens and young adults. Peer-reviewed research on the program has revealed that more than 60 percent of participants reported they had reduced or completely stopped using e-cigarettes after just two weeks. CHFS will be promoting This is Quitting on college campuses and through its social media accounts.

Truth Initiative is a nonprofit tobacco control organization that focuses on helping youth and young adults in America stop using tobacco products. "Quitting e-cigarettes can be isolating for young people," added Graham. "Text messaging is a proven, powerful strategy to deliver interventions that drive behavior change. We've taken input directly

from young people and positioned This is Quitting as a supportive, non-judgmental friend, with text messages written in the first person or as quotes from other users.”

Flyers and palm cards with the text code and number will be distributed to schools and other community partners across Kentucky who engage with youth and young adults. For more information about the program or to request materials contact DPH Tobacco Cessation Administrator Heather Shaw at heather.shaw@ky.gov or (502) 564-9358 ext. 4017

Additional information is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/>.

-30-

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.