



**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

**Department for Public Health Announces First
Vaping-Related Death**

Fatality from lung injury reported today as probable case

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 10, 2020) – The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) has announced the state’s first probable fatality related to vaping.

DPH, part of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), reports the fatality of a Kentuckian in its weekly online update of investigations related to e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI).

As of today, there have been 48 reports of possible EVALI. The fatality is included in 13 probable cases. There are seven confirmed EVALI cases and 15 pending cases. Eleven reports were determined not to be EVALI cases. Two additional cases investigated in Kentucky were residents of other states who were treated in Kentucky hospitals.

A probable case means that someone has a lung injury believed to be caused by vaping, but they also may have other health issues, like the flu or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). For confirmed cases, there is no other possible cause than vaping for the lung disease. A case is pending if the department is awaiting further information to make a determination.

DPH has been investigating reports of EVALI since September 2019.

CHFS Acting Secretary Eric Friedlander said vaping and using any tobacco or nicotine products is a health risk affecting the well-being of too many Kentuckians. “We are saddened to announce the death associated with this outbreak,” he said. “To protect public health, we urge Kentuckians – especially young people -- to stop using all vaping products.”

Dr. Angela Dearing, DPH Commissioner, said the fatality was a male in his late 20s. Other information is confidential to protect privacy. Dearing said health experts can't guarantee the safety of any e-cigarette or vaping product. In addition to nicotine, which is an addictive substance, e-cigarette aerosol contains cancer-causing chemicals and ultra-fine particles that cause respiratory problems. The long-term health effects caused by electronic cigarettes or vaping are currently unknown. “Electronic cigarette use is never safe for youth or young adults,” Dearing said.

A recently enacted federal law raised the minimum tobacco-buying age from 18 to 21.

Elizabeth Anderson-Hoagland, Health Promotion Section Supervisor with the DPH Chronic Disease Program, said that DPH offers several resources to help Kentuckians get on the path toward quitting.

- Quit Now Kentucky offers confidential, one-on-one coaching for Kentuckians of all ages who want to quit tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, dip and chew. Coaching is available by phone or online chat, and in English or Spanish. Quit Now Kentucky is available from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. Eastern time (6 a.m. to midnight Central time), seven days a week. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669); Text QUITKY to 797979; or go to <http://www.quitnowkentucky.org>.
- My Life, My Quit is a free, confidential quit line for teens 17 and younger who want to quit using tobacco products. This service is similar to Quit Now Kentucky, but was designed specifically for young people and uses coaches who are trained to work with adolescents. Coaching is available by text message, phone or online chat. For more information on how My Life, My Quit, call 1-855-891-9989, text START MY QUIT to 1-855-891-9989; or go to <https://www.mylifemyquit.com>.
- This is Quitting is a free texting service for young adults and teens who want to quit using e-cigarettes. This service is for people ages 13 to 24 and only provides coaching by text message. People who enroll in This is Quitting receive one text per day leading up to the day they quit vaping, and for at least two months after

they quit. This is Quitting is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To sign-up, text KENTUCKY to 88709.

For anyone using THC products, findhelpnowky.org is a real-time substance use disorder treatment availability locator and information center for Kentucky. The locator contains treatment providers and treatment openings across Kentucky. The site also contains information about substance use, treatment and recovery resources. Anderson-Hoagland said that while it is difficult to quit using nicotine, which is highly addictive and habit-forming, it is possible to quit using tobacco products.

“Quitting tobacco use at any age will improve your health,” she said. “We believe in the power of people to quit. And we support Kentuckians with these resources.”

Find tobacco cessation information and quitting resources here: <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dmch/hpb/Pages/quit.aspx>

The EVALI statistics and more information is available at <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dmch/hpb/Pages/pdinfo.aspx>. Case information is updated every Friday.

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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.