



HCCA and OUT Maine to Convene an LGBTQ+ Youth Focused Tobacco/Vaping Prevention Advisory Group

Healthy Communities of the Capital Area in Gardiner, in partnership with OUT Maine, Rockland, are building a diverse and robust Advisory Council to help guide our new initiative to reduce tobacco and vaping among Maine's LGBTQ+ teens. Funding for this multi-year initiative is through the Maine Centers for Disease Control.

While LGBTQ+ youth are particularly vulnerable to tobacco and vaping use (including vaping marijuana), all teens are susceptible to the advertising and peer pressure around smoking and marijuana.

Key issues include:

- LGBTQ+ youth have twice the usage of tobacco and vaping as their peers
- Tobacco is often the first drug for most youth, particularly rural youth, and is highly addictive – often within a week of first or regular use
- Tobacco and vaping often produce the first development of addictive behaviors – hiding, craving, lying, stealing to raise the money needed to purchase (one pack of cigarettes cost over \$7, vaping costs vary, but 4 JUUL pods are about \$16);
- Smoking and vaping provide an instant community of peers who provide acceptance – a vulnerability of all teens, but particularly LGBTQ+ teens;
- While teens often cite tobacco as an antidote to their anxiety and depression, nicotine withdrawal mimics the symptoms of depression and anxiety, creating a vicious cycle both physically and emotionally.

The long-term physical and mental health, as well as economic impacts of tobacco and vaping are of great concern. We need your help to address this trend.

Our advisory council will work with project staff in a more focused way over the next six months and meet quarterly in 2021 to maximize the project's short- and long-term impact. We anticipate a series of three to four 2- hour meetings over the next six months, beginning in the second half of July and proceeding every other month. Your work will help us with our needs assessment and data collection and then assist in the development of our work plan.

We'd like to invite you to become a member of the advisory council for the initiative. I'd be happy to chat more about the work by phone or zoom. Just let me know what works best.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne EA Joy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joanne EA Joy, Director

June 11, 2020

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