

# Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story

## Can You Hear Me Now? Connecting During Quarantine

### Summary

All of our tried-and-true tobacco prevention tactics were thrown out the window due to an unprecedented global pandemic that kept all of our community contacts at home alone or on the front lines with no time for tobacco talk.

### Need/ Issue (or “Challenge”)

The 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) reported that 30% of Kennebec County teens had vaped in the past 30 days. We know from discussions with our local youth that times of “boredom,” like summer vacation, is when they’re most likely to vape or try other substances. We were extremely concerned that youth vaping would increase even higher in Kennebec County without our intervention, and adult tobacco use would increase due to stress.

### Intervention/ Program Description

As of mid-March 2020, everything about all of our lives has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With all schools and nearly every workplace shut down, one thing we knew for sure – everyone was glued to their social media. Parents were suddenly homeschoolers searching for resources. Social-distancing adults and youth were looking for a human connection. The tobacco prevention team at Healthy Communities of the Capital Area (HCCA) decided to focus our efforts reaching our audience where they were: Facebook and Instagram.

We rallied the entire HCCA team to do daily Facebook Live chats at noon – tobacco prevention topics, SNAP-Ed, Let’s Go! 5-2-1-0, and Maine Youth Action Network coordinators filled the calendar with engaging content to support a community suddenly trapped at home. So far, our tobacco prevention team (having claimed Tobacco Tuesday) has presented about the benefits of workplace tobacco policies that outline quitting resources; why it’s incredibly important for behavioral health to support clients and employees who want to quit; and stress busting ideas, especially for those quitting during the COVID-19 Crisis. That last broadcast was informed by [an interview with the experts at the Maine Tobacco Helpline](#), with questions generated specifically related to trying to quit tobacco during the pandemic.

We also came up with the idea of an Instagram photo contest – people of all ages could share images of fun ways they were spending time besides vaping. The prize? Nine rolls of toilet paper April waited outside Sam’s Club to obtain before the rest of the crowds could claim them! The contest ends April 30.

We also began the process of converting vaping presentations, Sidekicks and Non-Clinical Outreach to webinar-style presentations to continue educating our community despite the current circumstances. Tobacco prevention partners across the state were thrilled to hear we will host a digital Tobacco Retailer training, and many plan to attend and learn at the first session, set for early April.

We’ve had to learn new technology and new ways to communicate to keep our tobacco prevention efforts in flight, but it’s been truly rewarding to connect with so many community members over social media – and we look forward to literally getting back into the community as soon as possible once we can!

**Results:** Our Facebook post sharing the MTHL interview link reached 423 people as of the time of this report – for scale, our Facebook posts before the virus generally reached 40-80 people. The Facebook Live series has also broken our records for social media reach: 1,519 people as of the time of this report!



### For More Information, Contact Us:

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