

## Summary

This winter, all of the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students of Boothbay Region Elementary School have been trained as Sidekicks. The [Sidekicks](#) program teaches conversation skills to help youth talk to their peers about tobacco and vaping. Sidekicks was first developed with the hard work of students and educators from the Boothbay Region.

## Need/ Issue (or “Challenge”)

While the use of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products has steadily declined among Maine youth, the use of e-cigarettes has recently surged. According to data from the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 45% percent of Maine high school students have tried using e-cigarettes and 29% now use them regularly.

In Lincoln County, 7.1% of middle schoolers reported current use of a tobacco product compared to 28.8% of high schoolers. Reaching students in middle school could help bring down rates of tobacco use in high school.

Students need to know how to talk about these products with their peers and feel empowered to get help.

## Intervention/ Program Description

In the fall of 2019, Sarah Gordon, the Guidance Counselor for Boothbay Region Elementary School trained to become a Sidekicks advisor. Ms. Gordon was enthusiastic about using the program in her 6th, 7th, and 8th grade “Family and Consumer Science” classes in early 2020. She felt it was important to educate her students about vaping and tobacco products, but also liked how Sidekicks teaches conversation skills that can be applied to other situations. Kelsey Wollen, the District Tobacco Prevention Partner in Lincoln County, worked with Ms. Gordon to co-teach the classes throughout January and February. The classes met once per week for 6 weeks. To give students even more information about e-cigarettes, Kelsey and Sarah supplemented Sidekicks with some materials from the Stanford Tobacco Toolkit .



“There was something meaningful for all students. It helps to meet kids where they are and the program has some things for more visual learners and other activities for students that like to talk more,” – Sarah Gordon, Guidance Counselor



## Results/ Success

Over 90 students completed the Sidekicks program. Several students shared that they had been able to start conversations with family members about tobacco while completing the Sidekicks training. The school is working with their local DTPP to plan continued education next year for students and staff.



**Boothbay Region  
Elementary School**  
Boothbay Harbor, Maine

## For More Information Contact Us:

Kelsey Wollen, LincolnHealth

207-563-4832

kelsey.wollen@lchcare.org



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