

Fostering Healthy Youth: YMCA of Auburn-Lewiston Passes Smoke- and Tobacco-free Policy



Youth deserve to live, learn, and play in environments that promote their health and protect them from the harmful effects of tobacco products. Given the health risks associated with tobacco product use, reducing youth initiation is critical, especially with the rise of e-cigarettes. **E-cigarette use among Maine youth**

has increased significantly from 2015 to 2019,¹ with 45% of Androscoggin County high schoolers reporting use at some point in their lives.² Youth are more likely to use tobacco products if they see peers using these products,³ highlighting the importance of tobacco-free environments for youth. One way to encourage these environments is through the creation of tobacco-free policies.

For several years, the YMCA of Auburn-Lewiston and Healthy Androscoggin (HA) have worked together to strengthen the YMCA's smoke- and tobacco-free policy. With funding from Maine Prevention Services (MPS), HA supported the YMCA in revising their policy to make it more comprehensive.



This ongoing effort by the YMCA of Auburn-Lewiston and HA **resulted in the passage of a stronger smoke- and tobacco-free policy**, effective February 1, 2020. The policy passage was complemented by new smoke-free signs, provided by MPS, for the YMCA campus and several YMCA vehicles. These signs will encourage those on YMCA property to remain smoke- and tobacco-free, protecting community members, including the children participating in on-site childcare, from the negative health effects of secondhand smoke.

"I'm so thankful for the YMCA's tobacco-free policy which protects my kids from second hand smoke when heading into or leaving the Y. With a small parking lot it used to be unavoidable that you'd have to walk through a cloud of smoke and now we don't have to worry about that. Thank YMCA for setting a good example for all of our little ones." – YMCA Child Care Parent

Tobacco-free environments adopted by community groups like the YMCA are known to reduce and prevent youth tobacco use.³ The YMCA's improved smoke- and tobacco-free policy will help to prevent youth tobacco initiation and **provide another safe environment for the nearly 1,500 youth served yearly by the YMCA of Auburn-Lewiston.**

Contact Healthy Androscoggin for more information
at info@healthyandroscoggin.org or 207-795-5990

References: 1. Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. (2019, December). 2019 MIYHS Vaping Infographic. 2. Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. (2019, December). Detailed Reports – Comparisons by Gender, Age, Grade, Hispanic Ethnicity, and Race. 3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, December 10). Youth and Tobacco Use. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Smoking & Tobacco Use.

