

# Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story

York County students take on the tough topic of tobacco!

This May Partners for Healthier Communities District Tobacco Prevention Partners' worked virtually with youth across York County, ME to teach the Sidekicks program. Sidekicks training helps youth to learn, practice, and implement motivational interviewing skills and other strategies for talking to peers or loved ones about their tobacco use and other challenging topics.

E-Cigarette use by Maine Youth has increased *significantly* since 2015.

According to the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) the number of Maine high school students who had ever used e-cigarettes increased from 34% in 2015, to 45% in 2019. We know that nicotine disrupts the growth of brain circuits that control attention, learning, and susceptibility to addiction in youth, and is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to use or purchase in Maine.

## SIDEKICKS



"I had a really positive experience! The mentors were very kind and excited to teach us and it was VERY helpful. I think that I will be able to have more conversations about the use of tobacco!"

-Sidekicks Participant, age 14



### Why Sidekicks, why virtually, and why now?

During the global pandemic that is COVID-19 we are all too aware of the increased stressors of navigating day-to-day life, challenges of major transitions, and other ways in which a public health crisis can lead to poor mental health outcomes and often times unhealthy coping strategies. At Partners for Healthier Communities we knew that our youth needed us now more than ever. Although Sidekicks was created to be presented in person because of its interactivity and length, we knew the importance of adapting and implementing it virtually. With the help of our Maine Youth Action Network (MYAN) Youth Coordinator we worked to adapt the curriculum to an entirely virtual format, without losing the ability for folks to participate and be interactive. With applications like google docs, Kahoot!, and Zoom, youth were able to participate in trivia style questions, true and false games, and polls along with using their voice and computer screens to have conversations with one another to learn and practice the material in a variety of ways.

### Moving Forward: how youth are using their skills as sidekicks during a pandemic

As a result of this sidekicks training, all participants have gone on to form a group where they are planning different ways to decrease tobacco use and promote awareness in their schools, among their peers, and in other environments. Though the group has just formed, they have been meeting regularly with Partners for Healthier Communities' MYAN Youth Coordinator to discuss ideas and plans for future events and outreach. We thank them for their success and continued work!

**For More Information Contact Us At:**

Partners for Healthier Communities  
blkelly@smhc.org

<https://www.facebook.com/partnersforhealthiercommunities>



Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention  
Department of Health and Human Services