

SIDEKICKS GOES VIRTUAL IN KENNEBEC COUNTY

Summary

Sidekicks trainings were adapted to fit a virtual platform during the pandemic and completed with interested schools in Kennebec County.

An epidemic during a pandemic

According to the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 29% of Maine high school students have used an electronic vaping device at least once in the past 30 days. This number is almost double survey reports of 15% in 2017. What's additionally troublesome is that nearly half of all Maine high school students surveyed have tried vaping at least once. Youth also stated that their social networks were their primary point of access.

In Steps Virtual Sidekicks...

Despite the many challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, one being the lack of in-person trainings in schools and youth-serving entities, Sidekicks was still able to operate virtually in Kennebec County. From November 2020 to May 2021, 6 groups of youth, a total of 95 students in both Middle and High School completed the Sidekicks program. The trainings were completed utilizing a hybrid model, with half the students present in class and the other half attending via Zoom.

The Results Are In!

While less interactive virtually than it would have been in person, a majority of the students were satisfied with the training. Being able to meet the needs of schools, address the youth vaping epidemic, and provide a much-needed program like Sidekicks during a global pandemic made this a success.

' I thought that our trainer did a very good job with keeping us active and involved even though it was virtual.'

- Erskine Academy Youth Participant

' It was very interesting and I am glad I learned as much as I did about this topic because it is very important'

- Winslow Jr. High Youth Participant



The Sidekicks program works with young people (12-18) and adult advisors in Maine to help teens find the words to talk to their peers about tobacco use and vaping.

Once trained as a Sidekick, youth have the skills to hold respectful conversations with their peers about tobacco use, as well as other risky behaviors. The Sidekicks program gives youth the skills and confidence to support their peers, as well as a network of Adult Advisors and Adult Ambassadors as a resource for questions and additional support.



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