

# ONLY SPRING IS IN THIS AIR!

How the Westbrook Community Center is Reducing Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

## A Season for Change

With spring on its way, the Westbrook Community Center (WCC) has begun preparing for expanded programming and an increase of youth visitors. Part of this prep has included adopting a more comprehensive tobacco-free policy and putting up new signage to display the change.

## Planting the Seed

After picking out a plot at their local community garden, a District Tobacco Prevention Partner (DTPP) for Cumberland County noticed in the gardening rules that smoking was not allowed but no other tobacco products were mentioned. The DTPP decided to reach out to WCC staff to inquire about their policy and if they were interested in implementing more comprehensive language.

As it turned out, the absence of specific language around electronic devices had become a recent issue as vaping incidents were occurring more frequently. It was also appealing to have new, free signage that illustrated how the use of combustible cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, and marijuana were not allowed on the property.



## Public Health Challenge

In the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey, approximately 2.06 million high school and middle school students reported using electronic cigarette products.

In order to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and aerosol, it is important for youth to have healthy spaces they feel comfortable spending time in and enjoy returning again and again.

*"...we serve a rather large group of high school & middle school age kids and that question always come up. 'I wasn't smoking, I was just vaping'. I just want to be clear for them."*

*- Michael Russell,  
Program Coordinator of Community Services at  
Westbrook Community Center*

## Reaping Rewards

Eager to complete the work, the WCC implemented their municipal policy within a week of receiving initial outreach. This policy covers the community center, athletic fields, community garden, trails, newly-renovated ice rink, and parking lots.

The City of Westbrook has over 20,000 residents and its community center provides critical services such as the local food bank, youth programs, senior programs, and more.



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