ENGAGING YOUNG NEW MAINERS

Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story

AT A GLANCE

Maine has seen an incredible increase in the amount of New Mainers coming from all over the world. Many of these New Mainers are young people who are entering the American Public School system for the first time and often do not have a strong grasp over the English language yet. In order to best do our work, we needed to find a way to include their learning needs in our E-Cigarette presentations.

PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE

Vaping and e-cigarette use continues to grow among Maine students. According to the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 45% of Maine youth have "ever used" e-cigarettes and 29% "currently use" e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes contain nicotine, an extremely addictive chemical that, according to the CDC, "can harm adolescent brain development" impacting: mood, learning and impulse control. Tobacco companies advertise their products as a better alternative to traditional cigarettes but long term health effects continue to be studied by professionals and remain largely unknown. With students who do not speak or read English well, seeing flashy and bold e-cigarette advertisements may be deceptive. As educators, we need to be able to communicate the facts to them.

APPROACH

When the Tobacco team was scheduling presentations for the end of the school year, we were notified by teachers that if we had translated resources, it would be helpful for their New Mainer students. This prompted us to make a fact sheet that followed our e-cigarette presentation with facts both in English and a native language. In one short week, we were able to get these fact sheets translated to Portuguese, Spanish, French, and Lingala using our own Portland Public Health Community Health Outreach Workers and a 3rd-party translation service. We chose those languages because they encompass the majority of native languages for New Mainers and were explicitly requested by the schools.

Photo from South Portland High School

RESULTS

With these translated materials in hand, we utilized them in 3 different schools before the end of the school year. We had mixed classes which included English Language Learner (ELL) students and their non-ELL classmates as well as an entire class of ELL students. The translated resources proved to be useful in both settings. It allowed the students to better understand the material and gave them the confidence to ask questions and participate. We ran into some issues when it came to understanding the questions and being able to respond properly which leads us to understand we need a more comprehensive rolodex of translated materials.

"...the ELL handout helped students ground themselves in the material and served as a way to pre-teach the lesson's content. It also helped students generate many thoughtful questions!"

Ruth Solow, Memorial Middle School health teacher

health & human services

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MAINE PREVENTION SERVICES
Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention
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