

Dakota Family Night focuses on vape awareness

Event seeks to open discussion between parents, students

- By Nicole Tuttle For MediaNews Group
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A Family Night Out event will be held at Dakota High School on Nov. 6 to discuss the topic of vape awareness. Pictured is a type of vaping device

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Dakota High School in Macomb Township will present Family Nigh Out: Vape Awareness on Nov. 6 in the school atrium.

In the midst of the statewide vaping debate, Dakota High School aims to clear the air on the trend for parents and teens by hosting a Family Night Out: Vape Awareness event.

Dakota High School will present Family Night Out: Vape Awareness on Nov. 6 in the school's atrium from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The school is located on 21 Mile Road, east of Heydenreich Road in Macomb Township. Dinner is included.

Dakota High School Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange said that the Dakota Coalition Teen Council has covered the topic through family nights before, but that in light of recent reports of the state's first death from a vaping-related lung injury, educators and teens felt another Family Night dedicated to the subject was warranted.

"So many kids do it and so many parents are scrambling for answers," Lange said.

There is no cost to attend the event, by registration is requested by contacting slange@cvs.k12.mi.us or calling 586-723-2872 by Nov. 5. The event is open to all adults in the community and to students in grades six through 12.

Vaping or e-cigarettes are electronic devices that heat a liquid and produce an aerosol. They come in many shapes and sizes, most utilizing a battery, heating element and a place to hold a liquid. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that most e-cigarettes contain nicotine and they can also contain other harmful substances.

Lange said that Rich Isaacson of the Drug Enforcement Agency will be present as a resource. Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) Public Health Coordinator Corey Beckwith will be speaking at the event. Students will lead round table discussions on vaping. Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will be presented, and Lange said that there will also be a larger discussion of the potential health effects.

"We will show video footage of the devices blowing up, injuries that happen to people," Lange said.

Lange also said that the program will involve signs parents can look for to help them determine if their teen may be vaping. Methods of starting conversations with youth about vaping will be discussed. The event will also focus on helping parents to recognize vaping devices, as some may look like everyday objects, according to Lange.

"What we are kind of worried about is the dual cartridge system, nicotine and the other cartridge is marijuana," Lange said.

Students will also be informed of the school-related consequences of being caught with vaping devices. Lange said student vape users can be suspended, with lengths of time varying depending on how frequently a student has been in trouble in the past.

"And then there are athletic consequences as well. You have to meet with the athletic director. But we want kids to get help more than punish them. Our goal is to really try to get kids to quit," Lange said.

To aid in this effort, students are encouraged to use the My Life My Quit free program through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, according to Lange. The program involves using text messages to encourage cessation.

"We will talk about how very addictive nicotine is, especially in the liquid forms. One pod is the equivalent of a pack of cigarettes," Lange said.

Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families is a school and community coalition that serves the geographic area of Chippewa Valley Schools and includes parts of Clinton and Macomb townships. The group works to prevent and reduce youth substance use and youth suicide. The coalition has teen councils in both Chippewa Valley High School in Clinton Township and Dakota. Charlene McGunn, the executive director of the coalition, said the group is in the process of redeveloping a vape prevention lesson which has been widely disseminated statewide.

"One of the realities related to vaping is the rapidly changing aspects of its devices and trends. So we just updated about six months ago and we will update it again. This is for health classes at the middle and high schools," McGunn said.

Information has also recently been sent to parents from the coalition that will assist them in starting conversations with their students about vaping, McGunn said. The coalition has created a PSA on vaping, and is seeking to create more parent information pieces.

"We are still finding that parents are not informed fully about the consequences of vaping," McGunn said.