



# Tobacco Use and Prevention in Warren County: 2021 Report



**Warren County  
Health District**





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## Tobacco Use and Prevention in Warren County: 2020 Report

### Introduction: Why Does Tobacco Use Matter?

Many people tend to believe that tobacco use is a thing of the past and has much less impact today than it did decades before. Surprisingly, all forms of tobacco, including new and emerging products, are still being heavily used today by people of all ages, backgrounds and regions. Some are impacted by tobacco use more than others. What's more concerning is that tobacco use can negatively affect our society in more ways than just our physical health. The following will provide a deep dive into the current snapshot of Warren County, Ohio, and how tobacco use has impacted communities in this county.

This report was written and developed through a collaborative partnership between the Warren County Health District and the Tobacco Prevention Committee of the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Warren County.

### Background: Why Warren County?

Warren County (see fig. 2 of County outline) is a rural county seated Northeast of Hamilton County, the metropolitan hub of the city of Cincinnati, and Southeast of Montgomery County, the metropolitan hub of the city of Dayton. Wedged between these two large cities, Warren County has seen significant growth of its population and development, especially within the towns, cities, and villages near these bordering counties, causing large suburban expansion over recent decades.

There are 8 public school districts, 2 private schools, a vocational school, and an alternative school for students that struggle with behavioral problems. With a relatively young population



(Figure 1) Tobacco products include more than just cigarettes, and each product is known to cause negative health impacts when consumed. Source: <https://www.smchealth.org/flavoredtobacco>

### Fast Facts:

- Tobacco use is the number one most preventable cause of death in the United States<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly half a million Americans die each year from tobacco-related illnesses<sup>1</sup>
- Tobacco-related illness and death cost American taxpayers more than \$300 billion per year<sup>2</sup>
- Tobacco use costs Ohio healthcare systems, businesses and taxpayers \$11.5 billion per year<sup>3</sup>
- Tobacco use disproportionately affects the young, people of color, the impoverished, those who experience mental illness and/or other substance use disorders, military and veterans, and LGBTQ+ populations<sup>4,5</sup>



(Figure 2) Map of Warren County, Ohio  
Source: <https://www.co.warren.oh.us/>

### Fast Facts:

- In Warren County, 17% of residents are current cigarette smokers, which is higher than the national average of 14%<sup>7</sup>
- An estimated 4,314 Warren County youth will die prematurely from tobacco use<sup>6,8</sup>
- Warren County experiences lung cancer deaths to be highest compared to any other type of cancer<sup>9</sup>
- About 10% of Warren County HS students have used combustible and smokeless tobacco products and 22% use e-cigarettes<sup>10</sup>

(about 25% are 18 or younger<sup>6</sup>), it is important that Warren County communities take the necessary actions to protect our most vulnerable from becoming tobacco users.

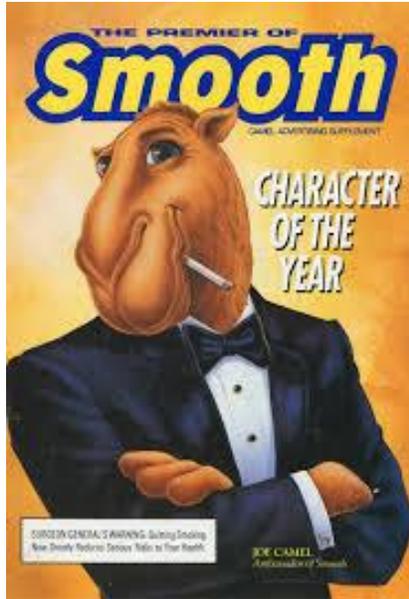
While Warren County has maintained an overall high socioeconomic status ranking, which often correlates with better health outcomes, there are several regions in the county that experience neither this socioeconomic status or better health outcomes. The Tobacco Prevention Committee identified the northwestern areas of the county and the central areas of the county as most heavily impacted by tobacco use, in addition to being ranked as the lowest socioeconomic regions in the county<sup>11</sup>. More specifically, the cities of Lebanon and Franklin, as well as the village of Carlisle, would benefit the most from its residents reducing tobacco use and increasing barriers to accessing tobacco products.

### Tobacco Sales and Marketing: Level of Impact

Despite public backlash since the first Surgeon General report in 1964 linking cigarette smoking to lung cancer, and the Big Tobacco master settlement of the 1990s, tobacco companies continue to make a lot of money by marketing and selling their products. While it may seem like adults are the target audience due to current laws in place, public health experts know that the industry's primary target is youth, young adults and other vulnerable populations. Why would this be? Let's examine the history behind the industry's marketing practices to see why.



Image Source: <https://countertobacco.org/>



(Figure 3) Before it was outlawed, Camel used a cartoon camel to mascot their cigarette brand. This imagery was found to be very appealing to children. Image source: [http://tobacco.stanford.edu/tobacco\\_main/images.php](http://tobacco.stanford.edu/tobacco_main/images.php)

The tobacco industry has gathered extensive data on people to learn how to market their products most effectively. In the past, the tobacco industry heavily supplied soldiers away at war with cigarettes, for them to eventually return home with cigarette smoking addictions<sup>12</sup>. Tobacco companies also benefited from mental health hospitals and inpatient settings that supplied cigarettes to help mentally ill patients “self-medicate” with nicotine<sup>12</sup>. The industry also put on very specific ad campaigns to the African American community and youth to use menthol flavored cigarettes<sup>13</sup>. Women were targeted for weight loss and appetite control, and also made smoking look glamorous through exposure in movies and Hollywood stars<sup>14</sup>. Tobacco companies used child-friendly flavors in their products, cartoon characters (see fig. 3), bright color schemes, and marketed these products through children oriented media<sup>15</sup>. Analysts researched which age groups were prime for starting smoking, with findings targeting ages 13-20<sup>15</sup>. Here are some quotes that illustrate this point made by past tobacco executives:

#### Fast Facts:

- Tobacco companies spend more than **\$1 million per hour** on marketing and promotional costs; 96% of that money is spent in marketing and promotions in retail settings<sup>2,16</sup>
- Youth exposure to tobacco advertising increases the likelihood that youth will try tobacco products<sup>17</sup>
- Tobacco advertisements and products are often placed near child-friendly drinks and foods, such as candy, ice cream and sweets, and may be placed at child height level<sup>18,19</sup>
- Many tobacco companies also own the top name brands of e-cigarettes, and vaping advertising has borrowed similar marketing practices as cigarette brands from the past<sup>20,21</sup>

**“Today’s teenager is tomorrow’s potential regular customer,** and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while still in their teens...The smoking patterns of teenagers are particularly important to Philip Morris.” - Philip Morris, Special Report, “Young Smokers: Prevalence, Trends, Implications, and Related Demographic Trends,” March 31, 1981.

**“The base of our business is the high school student.”** - Lorillard, Memo from executive TL Achey to former Lorillard President Curtis Judge re Newport brand, August 30, 1978.

**“Cherry Skoal is for somebody who likes the taste of candy,** if you know what I'm saying.” - Freedman, A, “Juiced up: How a tobacco giant doctors snuff brands to boost their ‘kick,’” Wall Street Journal, October 26, 1994 [quoting former UST sales representative].

“We don’t smoke that [explicit]. We just sell it. **We reserve the right to smoke for the young, the poor, the black and stupid.**” - R.J. Reynolds executive’s reply when asked why he didn’t smoke according to Dave Goerlitz, lead Winston model for seven years for R.J. Reynolds.] Giovanni, J, “Come to Cancer Country; USA; Focus,” The Times of London, August 2, 1992.

Even with all the existing evidence, the tobacco landscape has been changing. As new products emerge, and the public is less concerned about tobacco being a threat, the Tobacco Prevention Committee wanted to examine what’s going on in Warren County’s neighborhoods, including what exposures to tobacco industry advertising exist in the retail setting. The committee teamed up with the Teen Alliance Council, a youth-led prevention group organized through the Violence Free Coalition of Warren County, to conduct environmental store scans in



(Figure 4) A local convenience store in Warren County shows an advertisement for little cigars at a child’s height and displayed next to an ice cream freezer.

Franklin and Lebanon. These store scans looked at various observations, including whether or not there was tobacco advertising in the stores, where the advertisements were placed, what types of products were advertised and sold in the stores, product placement, what were the cheapest products sold in the store, and if age restriction signage was visible and updated from 18 to 21. The youth broke up into groups, each with an adult leader, to survey a total of 29 tobacco retailers. General findings are summarized in the following tables:

Franklin Tobacco Retailers – Store Scans Summary				
Product Type	Stores that sold this product	Advertised outside of store	Cheapest available?	Visible I.D. Signage?
Cigarette	100%	80%	\$2.00 for a pack	89% had visible, updated signage. 11% did not display proper signage.
Cigarillo	89%	12.5%	.99 for 2 pack	
Smokeless	88%	40%	\$3.59 for single can	
E-cigarette	50%	12.5%	.99 for single vape	

Lebanon Tobacco Retailers – Store Scans Summary				
Product Type	Stores that sold this product	Advertised outside of store	Cheapest available?	Visible Signage?
Cigarette	95%	50%	\$3.69 for a pack	90% had visible, updated signage. 10% did not display proper signage.
Cigarillo	100%	27%	.99 for 2 pack	
Smokeless	95%	33%	\$3.79 for single can	
E-cigarette	72%	28%	.99 for single vape	

After the completion of the environmental scans, the groups returned back together to discuss their observations and thoughts about the project. Here are some of the reflections stated by the youth:

*"It's really amazing to see how many advertisements there are for cigarettes and things like that. I don't think I ever noticed them much before, but some of them were below the counter. I thought that was interesting, because an adult wouldn't see that. So it makes you think why it would be placed there."*

*"I was surprised to see how inexpensive some [tobacco products] were. There were e-cigarettes for 99 cents each, and you could buy a two-pack of little cigars for less than a dollar at most of these stores."*

*"Our group saw some e-cigarettes placed next to donuts and a cigarillo advertisement by an ice cream freezer. We also saw the cheaper cigarettes and cigars next to [a cooler of] bottled juices. I feel like it would not be good for little kids to see the juice next to cigarettes."*



### **Enforcement: The Law and Buying Underage**

While the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the committee's plans to conduct compliance checks at local tobacco retailers in 2020, the tobacco prevention committee researched available Synar data, which helped with understanding how easy it is for minors to purchase tobacco products at local stores. The Synar Amendment requires all states to have laws prohibiting the sale and



Image source:  
<https://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS/TobaccoPrevention/tobacco-retail-environment.cfm>

distribution of tobacco products to minors. The program is overseen by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and requires stores to meet a certain compliance rate when undercover sales checks are conducted. A federal law was amended on

December 20, 2019, which raised the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 in all states, and will eventually impact the Synar program. However, there is a three year transitional period to when the program will update compliance checks to send in undercover between the ages of 18 and 20. Thus, all the current data are from compliance checks using undercover youth around the ages of 14-15.

Ohio law was also amended in 2019 to raise the minimum age for purchasing tobacco products from 18 to 21 (see fig 5). This law went into effect on October 17, 2019, and requires stores to update their signage from 18 to 21. However, there is little added to the enforcement component of this amendment, especially since the Synar program has not yet caught up with the federal changes.



(Figure 5) Image source and information about this law: <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/tobacco-use-prevention-and-cessation/tobacco-21>

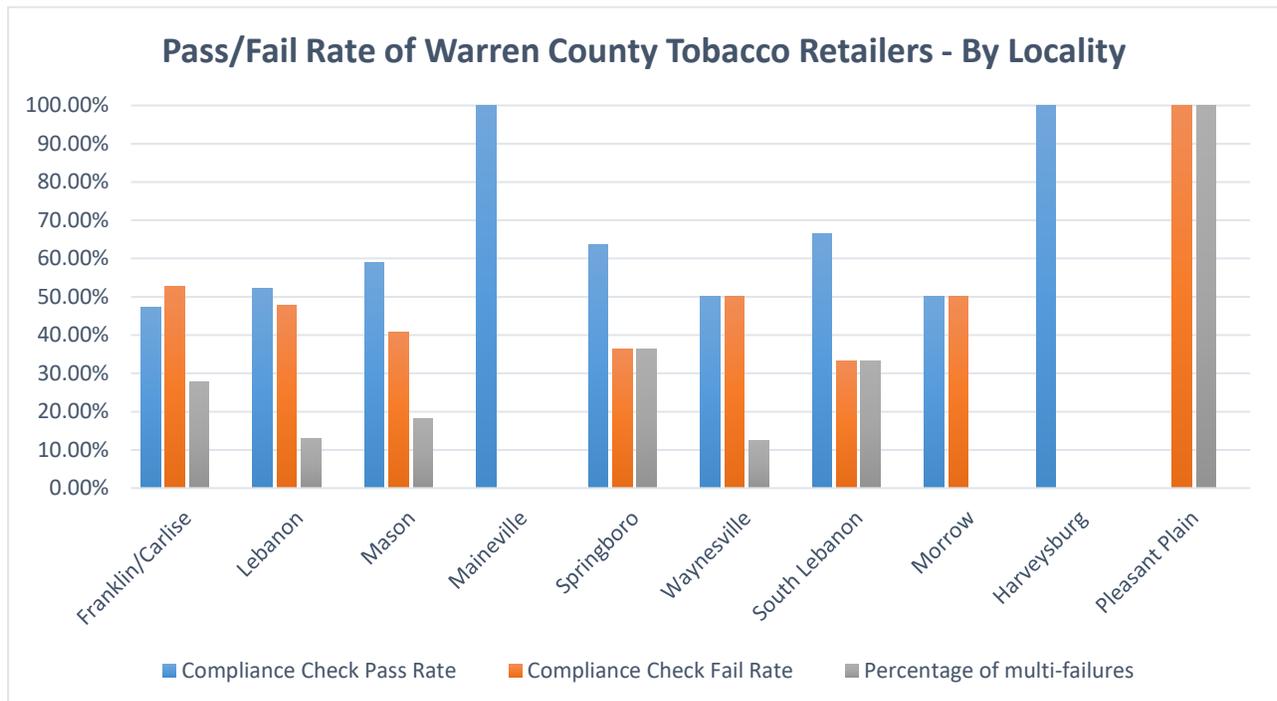
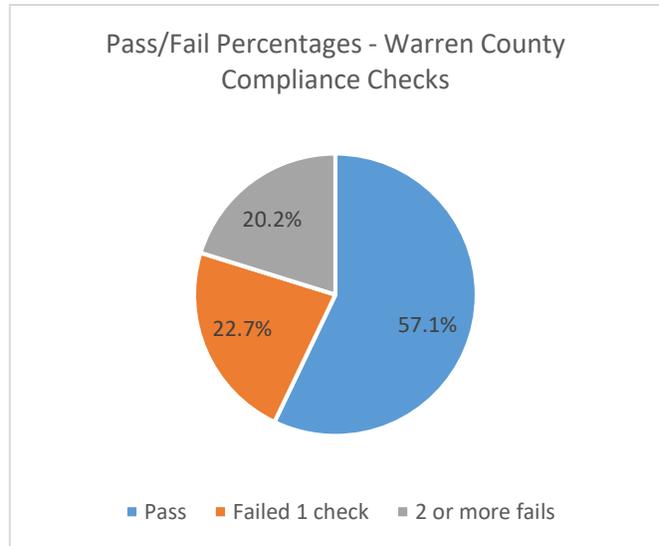
Therefore, in theory, it may be just as easy for an 18-20 year old to purchase tobacco products now as it was prior to the updated laws.

The following table displays data from Synar compliance checks over the past five years in Warren County, including how many stores passed and failed over the five year period.

Synar Data in Warren County, OH January 1, 2015 – September 12, 2020				
Locality/Zip code	Number of stores involved in compliance checks	Number of stores that passed	Number of stores that failed	Number of repeat offenders
Franklin/Carlisle (45005)	36	17	19	10
Harveysburg (45032)	1	0	1	0
Lebanon (45036)	23	12	11	3
Maineville (45039)	12	12	0	0
Mason (45040)	22	13	9	4
South Lebanon (45065)	3	2	1	1
Springboro (45066)	11	7	4	4
Waynesville (45068)	8	4	4	1
Morrow (45152)	2	1	1	0
Pleasant Plain (45162)	1	0	1	1
*Kings Mills (45034)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

\*No compliance checks were conducted in this locality over the 5 year period.

From the Synar data, a total of 119 stores were involved in compliance checks throughout the 5 year period in Warren County. 51 of those stores did not pass at least 1 compliance check that was conducted, where a tobacco product was sold to a minor. Of the 51 stores that had failed compliance checks, 24 stores had repeatedly failed compliance checks – the most occurring within Franklin/Carlisle with 10 stores selling to minors multiple times, followed by Mason and Springboro with 4, and Lebanon with 3.



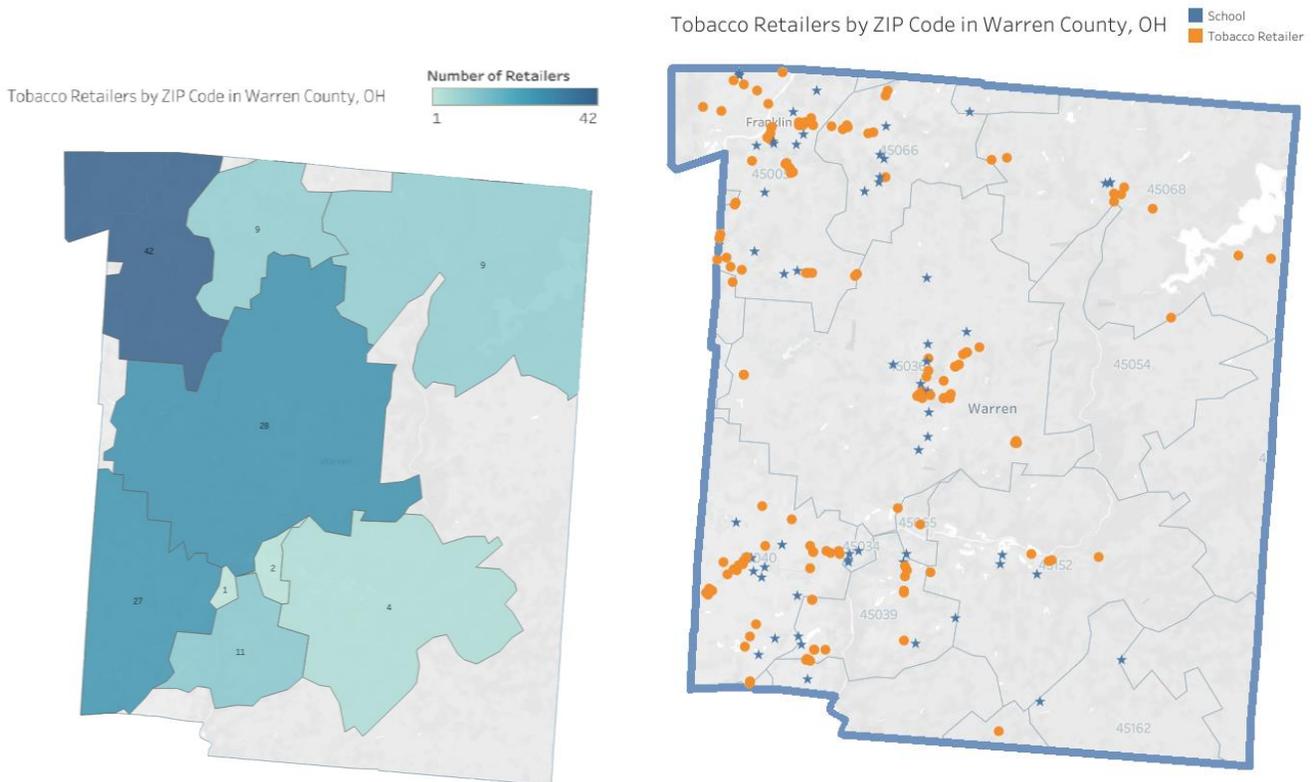
Franklin/Carlisle have the highest occurrence of sales to a minor, with 19 out of 36 tobacco retailers involved in compliance checks that sold to undercover minors; a failure rate of about 53%. Out of 19 businesses that failed tobacco compliance checks in the past 5 years, 10 retailers had multiple failures over this time period, including at least one store that failed 100% of their compliance checks (4 out of 4 times had sold to an undercover minor). This means that about 30% of the stores involved in undercover compliance checks sold to minors during multiple checks.

## Tobacco Retailer Density: Location Matters

The more tobacco retailers that are clustered in a neighborhood, especially near homes and schools, the more likely children and teens will experiment with tobacco products<sup>22</sup>. The number of tobacco retailers doesn't just affect young people; adult smokers will also consume more cigarettes in a day when living in an area with a higher tobacco retailer density, and they have a much harder time quitting<sup>22</sup>. Unfortunately, everyone's health suffers when they live in areas of higher concentration, or density, of tobacco retailers.

Part of this is due to the heavily plastered tobacco advertisements that often outline both the outside and inside of these stores. The more people see these advertisements, the more likely they are to purchase or experiment with tobacco products. This is especially true among young people<sup>23</sup>. One study found that 22% of daily smokers made unplanned cigarette purchases<sup>24</sup>. The same study found that tobacco advertisements in the retail setting influenced nearly 4 times as many unplanned purchases as planned purchases. The combination of easy availability of tobacco products and exposure to tobacco advertising and marketing normalize and promote tobacco use.

The Tobacco Prevention Committee wanted to examine how tobacco retailer density may be impacting Warren County communities. A compiled list of retailers were mapped out to determine overall density and their proximity to schools.



## E-Cigarettes and Vaping Products: How Safe are they and what is their Impact?



(Figure 6) Puff Bars are single-use, flavored, pod-based e-cigarettes, contain the same level of nicotine as the popular brand JUUL, and are visually similar in design. They retail 99 cents each and can be found at most tobacco retailers. Image source: reddit.com

E-cigarettes, also commonly called e-cigs, vapes, or by specific name brands, such as JUUL, are a newer style of tobacco product (see fig. 6). They work by heating up liquid nicotine through a battery in the device, which can either be recharged or disposed of after a single use, and the liquid is typically flavored. Originally, e-cigarettes were designed to mimic combustible cigarettes and were marketed to be safer and to help smokers quit. While some smokers have been able to successfully switch over from cigarettes to vapes, many become dual users and have trouble quitting their nicotine habit completely<sup>25</sup>. Vaping is not a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved method for quitting, and while there may be less chemicals in the vape liquids compared to combustible cigarettes, there are still harmful ingredients in these products that are not considered safe for human consumption<sup>26</sup>. Since vaping is still very new, the long-term effects are unknown.

### Fast Facts:

- 99% of all e-cigarettes and vape liquids on the market contain nicotine<sup>27</sup>
- Pod-based systems, such as JUUL, contain as much nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes<sup>27</sup>
- The liquids used in vapes can contain heavy metals such as nickel, tin and lead, which are known to be toxic<sup>27</sup>
- The long-term effects of using e-cigarettes are not known

One of the biggest issues to come from the popularity of e-cigarettes is how appealing they are to youth and those who previously were never tobacco users. Data from the Warren County PRIDE student drug use surveys have seen more 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders using vapes than any other substance, with nearly 20% admitting that they have tried vaping products in the past 30 days. This indicates that these respondents likely vape on a regular basis. Additionally, over 40% of 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders believe it is fairly easy or very easy to obtain tobacco products, such as cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, and 51% responded that it is fairly easy or very easy to obtain electronic vapor products. Another interesting point to examine is youth perception of harm. While there were more youth in 2020 that

believed vaping is harmful compared to the responses from 2017, more than 30% of 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students still believed there was only slight risk or no risk in using electronic vaping products. Nearly 40% of youth responded that their friends would not find their e-cigarette use concerning or wrong, meaning that peer perception of disapproval is not very low. This is

important because peer influence is known to be a large factor in whether or not youth experiment with substances.

The coalition conducted listening sessions (see fig. 7) in 2018 and in 2020 to understand more about the thoughts and perceptions youth have on electronic vaping devices. These listening sessions revealed that youth believe vaping products are easy to obtain and believe that their peers use them to fit in with their friend groups and for popularity. In the most recent youth listening session, in response to a question about whether or not people their age use nicotine products like vapes, one youth was quoted saying, “I feel like it's become so easy to get a hold of these days. And, I wouldn't say everybody is doing it, but a lot of people are.” Several youth revealed that they had heard of or witnessed upper classmen purchasing vapes for underclassmen and selling them at school. Some knew of specific convenience stores and other tobacco retailers that sell underage, stating that the clerks do not check for I.D., and a few mentioned they knew of some parents who would buy them for their children.



(Figure 7) A listening session, or sometimes called a focus group, is a data collection method where participants are asked to share their perceptions, experiences, beliefs, and opinions on a certain topic, typically prompted by questions through the facilitator. Groups are usually small and reply in a round-robin style. Identities are kept confidential to encourage candid responses. Image source: <https://www.accesscpca.org/cpca-hosts-regional-listening-sessions>

Additionally, parents are often unaware of how accessible vapes are to their children and may not be familiar that their child is using one, since vaping products typically don't have an odor, or they may smell sweet and fruity, which can be mistaken for gum, candy or lotion. Vaping devices can also look like everyday items. The devices can be very small and easy to conceal. While some parents do not know of the harm that vapes may cause and do not mind that their child vapes, others are aware but don't believe they can prevent their children from using these products. In a 2020 parent listening session, one parent was quoted saying, “I'm aware that my teen will get a hold of it when she's out of our sight.”

### **Nicotine on the Brain: It's Not Just the Lungs**

In the past, the biggest focus with tobacco products revolved around the fact that tar in cigarettes caused lung cancer. More than just that, a cigarette produces over 7,000 chemicals when it burns; 70 of those chemicals are known to cause cancer, and many others are believed to be harmful to the human body<sup>28</sup>. And it isn't just lung cancer to be worried about. The American Cancer Society has linked cigarette smoking to over 12 different types of cancer<sup>29</sup>. Other combustible tobacco products were found to have



Image source: [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

some of the same concerns or worse. For example, hookah can cause the user to inhale the tobacco smoke much more deeply into the lungs, causing more exposure to the harmful chemicals – and cigars being wrapped in processed tobacco leaves involves higher levels of chemicals, including nicotine, as compared to cigarettes<sup>30</sup>. What if it doesn't burn? Unfortunately, even smokeless tobacco is known to cause many types of oral cancers, lesions, and other dental concerns. Furthermore, an entire can of dip tobacco or loose leaf tobacco contains 3-4 times more nicotine than a pack of cigarettes, making it exceptionally addictive<sup>31</sup>.

#### Fast Facts:

- Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical found in all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes<sup>27</sup>
- Nicotine use at a young age can cause life-long addiction to tobacco products, leading to over 5 million years of potential life lost (YPLL)<sup>27,32</sup>
- Nicotine addiction can cause learning disability<sup>27</sup>
- Nicotine exposure before the age of 25 can significantly increase the risk of lifelong addiction to tobacco products and increases the risk of becoming addicted to other substances<sup>27</sup>

Where does vaping fit into all of this? Vaping, especially in its very early days on the market, has been purported to be harmless since it doesn't burn tobacco leaves. These claims are made due to the fact that electronic cigarettes do not produce the same type of smoke that a lit cigarette would, nor do they smell like a cigarette. But as noted on page 8, the "vapor" from an e-cigarette is far from pure water vapor. In fact, it does not produce a vapor at all – it technically produces an aerosol, which is also what cigarette smoke is<sup>27</sup>.

The most popular brands on the market are pod-based systems. The brand JUUL, in particular, has reigned above all others as far as overall sales and market share. It is also an Altria brand, the same owner of Marlboro cigarettes. One JUUL

pod contains the same amount of nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes – and is extremely popular among teens and young adults<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, it's easy to see how young people can become so addicted to these products, considering how much nicotine is in them, how easy they are to access, and how widely accepted they are to use among their peers.

Youth and young adults are more vulnerable to the effects of nicotine compared to older adults. This is because brain development continues up until the age of 25. The last part of the brain to finish developing is the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for weighing outcomes, forming judgements, controlling impulses and emotions, and long-term decision making. Nicotine exposure during this period of development can affect this area of the brain, increasing the likelihood that an individual will develop mood disorders, lower impulse control, disrupt the ability to learn and retain information, more frequent risk-taking behaviors, and addiction to other substances<sup>27</sup>.



Image source: <https://www.apa.org/topics/addiction>

## Strategies for Addressing Tobacco Use in Warren County: Tobacco Retailer Licensing

When determining how to create a healthier community by reducing tobacco use, effective, evidence-based strategies should be considered. Educating the public is certainly one strategy to employ, but education alone will not be able to make a substantial difference in preventing



(Figure 8) The Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, or D.A.R.E., is a drug prevention education program delivered by law enforcement officers to youth, and is popular in many school systems and communities. While iconic, research has found that the program sometimes had an unintended effect of being ineffective and saw an increase in substance use behavior among the youth who had received the program<sup>33</sup>. Image source: <https://dare.org/d-a-r-e-america-louis-skip-miller-national-scholarship-award-2019/>

youth from becoming tobacco users. Some educational programming exists within schools through health classes, D.A.R.E. programming (see fig. 8), and through youth organizations and clubs. However, these educational outlets spend limited time on the topic of tobacco specifically, and may not have updated curriculums to address the newer, emerging products. Conversations around tobacco products usually only focus on the negative health effects of consuming the products. Often times there is little emphasis on practicing refusal skills or addressing the complexities of peer pressure and family culture around acceptance of tobacco use. Therefore, it's very easy for youth to not hear the correct messaging about tobacco prevention.

The most effective way to prevent young people from initiating tobacco use is to combine educational strategies with barriers to accessing tobacco products. This means minimizing the possibility for youth to purchase tobacco and electronic nicotine delivery systems. One of the best ways to do this is through tobacco retailer licensing. When a locality requires tobacco retailers to meet compliance through display of proper I.D. signage (see fig. 9) and passing a higher percentage of undercover compliance checks, the community benefits from having less opportunities for minors to access tobacco products<sup>34</sup>. In coordination with the current state law, which raised the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21, a tobacco retailer licensing policy provides an establishment of proper enforcement, which the state law currently lacks, to ensure local youth cannot easily purchase tobacco products.

In the focus group data, most youth indicated that older siblings or upperclassmen purchase tobacco products to then turn around and sell them to younger teens. This was especially the case before the Tobacco 21 law went into effect. However, since there is no enforcement component to the Tobacco 21 legislation, and compliance rates are often relatively low in many of the



(Figure 9) Signage that is compliant with the current state law must be displayed in all tobacco retailers. As noted on page 4, many Warren County stores that were surveyed in early 2020 did not display visible signage or had not updated signage from 18 to 21. Image source: <https://www.facebook.com/cantonhealth/posts/10157425526559277>

neighborhood stores that sell tobacco products to those under the age of 18, let alone 21, the Tobacco Prevention Committee presumes that it is relatively easy for minors to purchase tobacco without being asked to show I.D. Therefore, regular undercover checks are necessary to ensure retailers are selling their products responsibly by following federal and state law, and most importantly, preventing youth access to these addictive, hazardous products.



Image source: <https://tfp-highlands.org/news.html>

In addition to providing regular compliance checks, the way the penalties are laid out should also be examined. Current law involves charging a misdemeanor on the clerk that sold to the underage person, which comes with a fine. While the clerk should certainly be following the law, the goal is to encourage the store owner to take more responsibility by ensuring clerks have proper training to check for I.D. and emphasizing the importance of following state and federal law by not selling to underage persons. When store owners take on more of this responsibility, selling underage decreases<sup>35</sup>. In that case, store owners should also be penalized if tobacco products are sold to underage persons, not just the clerk. This may be done through a tiered fine system, which increases on each subsequent failed check, up to the retailer losing their license to sell tobacco products if there are numerous fails from compliance checks.

### **How to Implement Tobacco Retailer Licensing In Local Communities**

The following steps will help support efforts towards implementing effective tobacco retailer licensing policies on the local level. Tobacco prevention and control strategies require the help and support of many people - because the work relies on a diverse set of skills, backgrounds and experiences among many different sectors committed to the work. There are several ways to help work towards this positive impact. The Tobacco Prevention Committee has outlined 4 steps you can take to help achieve this goal:

#### **1. Attend Tobacco Prevention Committee Meetings to Learn More and Get Involved**



The Tobacco Prevention Committee is an active committee that discusses tobacco prevention strategies and collaboratively works together to develop and implement plans to reduce tobacco use in Warren County. The committee sees the importance of implementing tobacco retailer licensing and this strategy has been an important discussion within the group. This committee is part of a larger coalition, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Warren County (SAPC), which addresses local substance abuse issues through enactment of prevention methods.

Both the committee and the greater coalition each meet once a month. For information about meeting times, location, and more can be found on the coalition website: [sapcwarrencounty.com](http://sapcwarrencounty.com) or you may email the coalition coordinator at [info@sapcwarrencounty.org](mailto:info@sapcwarrencounty.org).

## 2. Educate Important Decision Makers in your Community to Create Awareness



Image Source:  
<https://www.changelabsolutions.org/product/tobacco-retailer-licensing-playbook>

Now that you are aware of the importance of tobacco prevention in Warren County and the benefits of tobacco retailer licensing policies, helping to spread the word to others can assist with increasing awareness. The more people that become aware, the greater the support for important policy change.

This is especially necessary with our local decision makers and key leaders. These individuals receive so much information day-to-day, it's not always possible for them to know concerns like this exist until it is brought to their attention. By sharing your support for policy change, you will help policymakers understand the demand for such a change to happen. If you notice a community meeting happening in your area, such as a council meeting or town hall, show your support by attending and speaking in support of tobacco prevention efforts.

## 3. Connect Relevant Agencies Together in Forming a Policy Solution

Many non-profits, local government agencies, and civic/volunteer groups can have overlapping goals that support one another. Perhaps you notice there is a group of experts or those driven to make positive changes in your community who are missing from this conversation. Maybe there is already a group working towards this goal that has not been connected with the Tobacco Prevention Committee or SAPC. It is so important to involve these other groups for many reasons, as it can increase support, funding, or other resources that are needed to successfully create – and pass – a tobacco retailer licensing policy.

## 4. Show your Support for Tobacco Retailer Licensing Policies up for Voting

Has the time come for your city to vote in favor for or against a tobacco retailer licensing policy? These votes typically happen at city council meetings where the policy is on the agenda item. Take the time to attend these meetings if you can. Again, the more community support there is, the more likely the policy will be favored by decision makers. Spread the word, bring a friend, and make it known that you support important policies, such as tobacco retailer licensing, in order to work towards a healthier community.



Image source: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Public-Comment-at-a-City-Council-Meeting>



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