



*Creating a Healthy Connected Cape Cod*

## **Barnstable County Department of Human Services unveils** **“Escape the Vape” campaign**

Launches partnership with Monomoy Regional School District; online toolkit

**HARWICH, MA. (September 16, 2019)** -- The Barnstable County Department of Human Services My Choice Matters substance use prevention initiative aims to extinguish vaping among Cape Cod youth with the launch of a new “Escape the Vape” campaign and online toolkit this fall.

The awareness and education campaign will target parents, caregivers, middle school and high school students, **beginning with a partnership with Monomoy Regional School District.** The effort is being led by Barnstable County Department of Human Services Substance Use Program Manager Kim Slade.

Slade will be on hand for **curriculum night at Monomoy Regional High School on September 19**, where she will hand out backpacks containing information and resources to educate families about what parents need to know and how to talk to their kids about vaping. She will also be present for **curriculum night at Monomoy Regional Middle School on September 26<sup>th</sup>.**

That will be followed by a **vaping presentation** Slade will give **at the school district’s first Parent University session on October 23rd.**

“We have developed an online vaping toolkit that can be used as a primary resource and guide to help steer our youth away from this insidious re-emergence of nicotine products. We are excited to be working with Monomoy Regional School District and hope to work with all the school districts across the Cape,” says Slade.

Monomoy Regional School District Superintendent Dr. Scott Carpenter says the district is taking a proactive approach to combatting vaping, noting that in addition to working with the Barnstable County Human Services Department the district has also implemented the Caron Treatment Center’s Project Connect to help students who do vape kick the harmful habit.

“We firmly believe that an open, proactive approach is the best way to help keep our students healthy and safe,” says Carpenter. “By integrating Project Connect, which will educate and support students who are vaping, with a family education program in collaboration with the Barnstable County Department of Human Services, we hope to ensure that all members of our school community are well informed about the dangers of youth vaping.”

This youth vaping education project is a continuation of Monomoy Regional School District's forward-thinking vision for managing the safety of its students. Monomoy students participate in a biannual Youth Behavior Risk Survey, and the district shares the results of that survey with students, families, and the community through a series of presentations. This year's survey results will be presented later this fall.

"The best way to reduce risk is to honestly and openly discuss the challenges students are facing and the choices they are making," says Carpenter. "With that information, we can then address the root issues that lead to risky behaviors."

While vaping has been around for a decade, teens use of e-cigarettes has exploded over the last few years. According to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future study, nearly 1 in 3 high school students have tried vaping in the past year. Many become addicted to the flavored nicotine-infused liquid used in e-cigarette devices.

"As a society we had nearly wiped out cigarette use among youth. Now, with the emergence of vaping, we are seeing a new generation becoming addicted to nicotine. And this time around it's much tougher to deal with because it's harder to detect when students are vaping. Also worrisome is that some teens have figured out how to re-use the nicotine pods by filling them with marijuana concentrate," says Slade.

"Thanks to the sleek and sophisticated marketing of these cool-looking modern devices, Big Tobacco is back with a vengeance. Because e-cigarettes were first introduced as a cigarette cessation device, many young people and parents see this as somehow safe without any real health consequences, which isn't true," Slade says. "It may help traditional cigarette users to quit, but when it comes to youth vaping, we are seeing kids introduced to nicotine for the first time with these devices, becoming addicted to nicotine, and in some cases moving on to other substances."

"Escape the Vape" is all about arming parents, caregivers and youth with the information and assistance they need to make healthy choices, Slade says.

In addition to the partnership with Monomoy Regional School District, Slade has been on a speaking tour, addressing school resource officers across the Cape, as well as other youth-serving organizations. In August, she gave a presentation to 250 Cape Cod Collaborative bus drivers on how to spot vaping on school busses.

To access the Barnstable County Department of Human Services Vaping Toolkit please visit <https://www.mychoicematters.net/vaping-toolkit/>

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#### **About Barnstable County Human Services Department My Choice Matters initiative:**

My Choice Matters is a social norming campaign implemented by the Barnstable County Department of Human Services that works with a coordinated system of prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery partners so that Cape Cod communities are happy, healthy, safe and thriving. The mission of the Barnstable County Department of Human Services is to plan, develop, and implement programs which enhance the overall delivery of human services in Barnstable County, to promote the health and social well-being of County residents through regional efforts designed to improve coordination and efficiency of human services, and designed to strengthen the fabric of community care available to all.