

Implementing My Life, My Quit™ as an Alternative to Suspension

TOOLS TO ADDRESS VAPING IN SCHOOLS

School policies regulating the use and possession of commercial tobacco products often contain punitive measures for student violations. Suspension and expulsion are sometimes used to enforce these policies. However, suspensions are counterproductive and harmful.¹

Intentionally addictive products

Commercial tobacco products, like cigarettes, vapes, and chew, contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. The tobacco industry spent decades intentionally and strategically marketing its products to young people. Once addicted, it can be extremely difficult to quit. This is why students may continue to use these products in school despite policies that prohibit their use and possession.

My Life, My Quit™ supports students in quitting

My Life, My Quit™ helps Minnesota teens ages 13-17 quit vaping, smoking, or using other commercial tobacco and nicotine products. My Life, My Quit™ coaches are specially trained to engage teens who have been referred for help by parents, educators, and the justice system and are required to complete a commercial tobacco treatment program as an alternative to punishment.

My Life, My Quit™ is based on the established and evidence-based telephone coaching model that has proven effective for adults. It was developed with teen feedback and has been tailored to meet the unique needs of teens. Coaches combine cognitive-behavioral techniques with motivational interviewing that has been proven effective for changing teen behaviors with drug, alcohol and commercial tobacco use.



How to implement My Life, My Quit™ as an alternative

Step 1: Update school policy

Make sure your school has a commercial tobacco- or nicotine-free policy in place. Include the completion of the My Life, My Quit™ program as an alternative to suspension in the enforcement section of your policy.

¹ American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2008). *Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools?: An evidentiary review and recommendations*. *The American Psychologist*, 63(9), 852-862.

Step 2: Communicate the policy to staff and students

Make sure both staff and students are aware of the policy – update the student handbook or codes of conduct. Include the full policy and its definitions and consequences as well as information about how students and their families can seek free help to quit.

Make sure staff are knowledgeable of My Life, My Quit™ and have the information they need to talk to students about the program.

Step 3: Refer students to My Life, My Quit™

School staff can refer students directly to My Life, My Quit™. Once you submit the referral, My Life, My Quit™ will contact the student within 24 hours and complete an enrollment. You will receive a confirmation email to let you know that My Life, My Quit™ received your referral.

To make a referral, complete and submit an online referral form at https://mn.mylifemyquit.org/Provider_Web_Referral.

Step 4: Allow student to complete the My Life, My Quit™ program

Students will receive a confirmation email when they enroll – they can use that email to prove that they have enrolled. Once the student has completed the program by completing five coaching sessions, they will receive a certificate of completion that they can provide to school administrators as proof of program completion.

Most program participants will complete the program in eight weeks or less. If the participant has not completed the program in the eight-week period, they can ask for additional proof from their quit coach that they are still enrolled in the program.

After completing five coaching sessions, My Life, My Quit™ sends a printed watermarked certificate directly to teens to reduce unauthorized duplication and to prove they completed the program. Because of regulations governing privacy of information, certificates are only sent to the teen who completes the program.

Once the student completes the program, consider removing the commercial tobacco use infraction from the student's permanent record. This helps build trust with teens and motivates them to engage in the program, knowing there is a reward for completion.

Step 5: Provide ongoing support

Continuing providing support, even after the student completes the My Life, My Quit™ program. Nicotine is highly addictive, and students may struggle with staying quit for numerous reasons, such as peer pressure, social influences, and behavioral health issues (e.g. depression or anxiety).

Additional support could include:

- Setting up an appointment to have the student meet with the school counsellor, social worker, or other supportive staff
- Connecting the student with a student group that is peer led and could provide support
- Connecting the student with other social groups, clubs, or sports that encourage continued abstinence from commercial tobacco use

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Teens can re-enter the My Life, My Quit™ program as many times as needed, and each time, they are eligible for five coaching sessions.

Learn more about commercial tobacco use prevention and treatment at health.mn.gov/tobacco.

Minnesota Department of Health
Commercial Tobacco Prevention and Control
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-3535
tobacco@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/tobacco

04/06/2026

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