

The benefits and risks of electronic cigarette use are uncertain. They carry a risk of promoting long-term nicotine use, and their regulation is the subject of ongoing debate. Since e-cigarettes have not been scientifically evaluated, there is no evidence that they are safe, or that they are effective in helping tobacco users quit.

Because clinical studies about the safety and effectiveness of e-cigarettes have not been submitted to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), consumers currently have no way of knowing whether e-cigarettes are safe for their intended use, how much nicotine or other potentially harmful chemicals are being inhaled during use, or if there are any benefits or risks associated with using these products.

Due to the widespread marketing and early adoption of e-cigs, youth are exposed to them at an early age, and health officials are concerned this will “renormalize” smoking behaviors and cigarette use.

The liquid nicotine (sometimes called “e-juice”) sold in smoke and vape shops comes in a seemingly endless number of kid-friendly flavors, and e-cigarette manufacturers are aggressively marketing to children with flavors like Bazooka Bubble Gum, Captain Crunch, and Mountain Dew.

E-cigarettes are the new preferred nicotine delivery device for youth in our state. According to the Utah Department of Health, the percentage of Utah high-school-age students who use e-cigarettes tripled between 2011 and 2013. Currently, 5.9% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in Utah use e-cigarettes, while only 3.8% smoke cigarettes. The data also show that 31.7% of students who reported ever using e-cigarettes say they have never tried conventional cigarettes. School resource officers in Salt Lake County consider e-cigarette use among youth an

“epidemic.”

Younger children are also subject to harm from their parents’ or older siblings’ e-cigarette paraphernalia, too: According to the Utah Poison Control Center, e-cigarette “juice” has sent 79 children ages 6 and under to hospitals since January 2012. There were 10 such poisoning cases in 2012, 48 in 2013, and 21 in 2014 so far.

Some cities and states are pushing back against e-cigarettes, and taking steps to regulate their sale and public use. These local and state efforts should be followed and strengthened by federal action. Attorneys general from 40 states have called on the Food and Drug Administration to regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products, a move that would give the FDA the power to impose age restrictions and limit marketing of the devices and liquids. The agency has not yet publicly released their proposed rules, however.

Across the country, small storefronts known as smoke shops and vape shops are opening. Smoke shops sell tobacco paraphernalia, tobacco products, and e-cigs, while vape shops sell solely e-cigs and e-juice. Currently, we have 75 smoke shops and 14 vapor shops in Salt Lake County—though numbers change regularly.

Utah mandates, under state code 59-14-201, that any business intending to selling tobacco in the state of Utah must have a tobacco license. In addition, the state requires every tobacco retailer to undergo tobacco compliance checks up to four times yearly in order to reduce the number of illegal sales to underage youth.

Compliance checks remain one of the key strategies for states and local authorities to reduce smoking among young people. The federal Synar Amendment requires

What Can YOU Do?

As a leader in your city or community, you can help keep e-cigarettes away from youth.

Ask your zoning or business licensing officials to ensure that any current or proposed smoke or vapor shops in your community meet the requirements of state law, under both Utah Code 59-14-201: Tobacco Licensing and 10-8-41.6: Retail Tobacco Speciality Business Regulations).

states to implement and maintain a compliance check system that ensures that youth tobacco sales stay at or below 20% in order to receive federal substance abuse prevention and treatment dollars.

Last year, 19% of smoke shops in Utah sold to minors younger than 19, and all other tobacco outlets—gas stations, grocery stores, etc. had a 5.2% fail rate.

In July 2012, legislation passed that requires new smoke and vape shops to obtain a retail tobacco specialty business license to operate, and restricts where those businesses can operate. Under the law, a business cannot be within 1,000 feet of a community location—a school, child care facility, church, library, public park or playground, youth center, or public arcade—or within 600 feet of property zoned or used for agriculture or residential use. Businesses are required to submit annual gross receipts if the sale of tobacco products accounts for more than 35%.

For more information about electronic cigarettes, contact [Kathy Garrett](#), SLCoHD tobacco prevention and cessation program manager, at 385-468-4080.