

# ***SUCCESS STORY: Coalition helps improve compliance at retail locations with existing laws to reduce substance advertising***

## **Winooski Partnership for Prevention**

Malletts Bay Avenue Before Enforcement



Main Street Before Enforcement



Main Street After Enforcement



### **Ads were everywhere**



Ads for alcohol and tobacco were common on the outside of stores in Winooski, affixed to sign posts, gas islands, and chain link fences. The WPP identified this as a risk factor for youth tobacco initiation.

### **Ads were grandfathered**



Because the stores had been there "forever," the signage they had was grandfathered in and allowed. However, if the WPP could prove that the signs had changed, that would mean that they were no longer grandfathered.

Upon interviewing the city's planner and other planners in Chittenden County, the WPP learned that the zoning code actually prohibited this type of signage at these locations.

### **Documentation was key**

The WPP took an initial round of photos documenting signage that was there in order to establish a baseline. A few months later, we returned to take another set of photos. Because of what we'd learned from Counter Tools, we knew that the signs 3 months later were likely to be different than what was there earlier because distributors usually provided these types of ads to the retailers. The ads had changed!

If they weren't allowed by zoning, why were they there?

We wanted to find out. In subsequent discussions with the Winooski City planner, we learned that the reason the laws were hard to enforce was because there wasn't enough staff to take time to document the violations.

After providing documentation to the city's planner of the changes in signage, he was able to provide documentation to the zoning administrator who we presume was able to then enforce the rules. The result is that only one out of 13 retailers is now out of compliance. We will continue to follow up with that one.

# Potterpoolza & the Muggle Mile

New approaches to the Health Fair and sharing resources in the community



## Potterpoolza & the Muggle Mile July 23, 2022.

Harry Potter themed health fair and fun attracted over 500 people of all ages. Partners for Prevention organized this successful health event with our Partner COME ALIVE OUTSIDE.

This was a new spin on the traditional Health Fair , we built off the success of our MAY the Fourth Star Wars themed event from May 2022.

## Costumes were encouraged for added fun.

Community partners dressed as the characters of the Potter universe and led "Potter" themed activities while emphasizing important health messages.

There were over 20 community organizations engaged on Diagon alley (vendors area). Protective factors to substance abuse



Drug/ Alcohol /Vaping Prevention trivia games, mindfulness activities, Horcruxes- Rutland Mental Health youth mental health awareness /resources, Physical activity Muggle mile- Come Alive Outside, Heritage bank, Trinity Church, Mentor Connection, Stress reduction skills- Rutland library, Rutland Recreation department- Quidditch, Miss Vermont & Teen VT, Harry Potter themed food trucks, Dept of Solid waste – sorting trash & Vaping device disposal awareness, Culinary & Dark arts- bug tasting and food insecurity resources, wand making, fortune telling, Starbucks- butterbeer , a mist fan ran by Rutland city fire fighters and many other community volunteers.





This event had amazing media coverage. WCAX did a piece the Thursday before and the evening after the event, Rutland Herald wrote a piece on the event plus we had much community advertising.

Partners for Prevention utilized our new Marijuana, Alcohol and Tobacco/ Vaping education banners throughout Diagon alley.

Vaping/ smoking cessation resources were available at the sign in table (Hogwarts) as well as throughout the eating (dinning) area.



With the right community partners –anything is possible. Reaching the community with important health messages can be fun and engaging.



**Next steps-**

**This was a successful event, despite being over 90 degrees we had a fantastic turn out of all ages AND people are already planning next year.**





# Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital: Youth Connectedness



## Social Media Promotion of Protective Factors for Youth



### Challenge: Helping Youth Know They Matter

According to the 2019, YRBS data, only 55% of Caledonia county youth feel like they matter to their community. The grantee's goal is to reach youth in our region through social media in order to promote healthy activities which cultivate protective factors against tobacco usage. These include interventions that promote positive identity development, self-efficacy, and pro-social peer relations.<sup>1,2</sup>



### Solution: Engaging Youth Through Social Media

Teens perceive Instagram as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important form of social media. Over 80% of users claim that it helps them do research and make decisions. Therefore, the grantee has created an Instagram account to promote protective factors for youth. This account will have frequent posts that advertise healthy activities and enriching community events. 3, 4



### Promotion

Local schools provided input on what sort of promotional items would be most appealing. These items include stickers and magnets.

The grantee then hired a designer to work with youth and co-create interesting designs.

These designs include a QR code that links to the grantee's Instagram account, increasing accessibility and interactivity.



### Next Steps

- Launch the Instagram page
- Distribute the promotional items to students
- Work with local schools to create opportunities for students to help with content creation
- Partner with local youth organizations
- Partner with local businesses to offer discounts or events for youth in order to promote youth connection to the community

1. 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report - Vermont Department of Health. (n.d.). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from [https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSVR\\_YRBS\\_CALEDONIA\\_2019.pdf](https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSVR_YRBS_CALEDONIA_2019.pdf)

2. Corona, R., Turf, E., Cornielle, M. A., Belgrave, F. Z., & Nasim, A. (2009, April). *Risk and protective factors for tobacco use among 8th- and 10th-grade African American students in Virginia*. Preventing chronic disease. Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2687851/>

3. *How to sell your products on Instagram*. Instagram for Business. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://business.instagram.com/blog/how-to-sell-your-products-on-instagram/>

4. Published by S. Dixon, & 28, M. (2022, March 28). *Social networks used by teens in U.S.* Statista. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/250172/social-network-usage-of-us-teens-and-young-adults/>



# Increasing Town Plan Health Chapters

Leveraging town plans for tobacco policy advances – one town at a time

## Partners



**TRORC**  
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee  
REGIONAL COMMISSION



VDH Offices of Local Health  
Hartford & Springfield

Key partners:

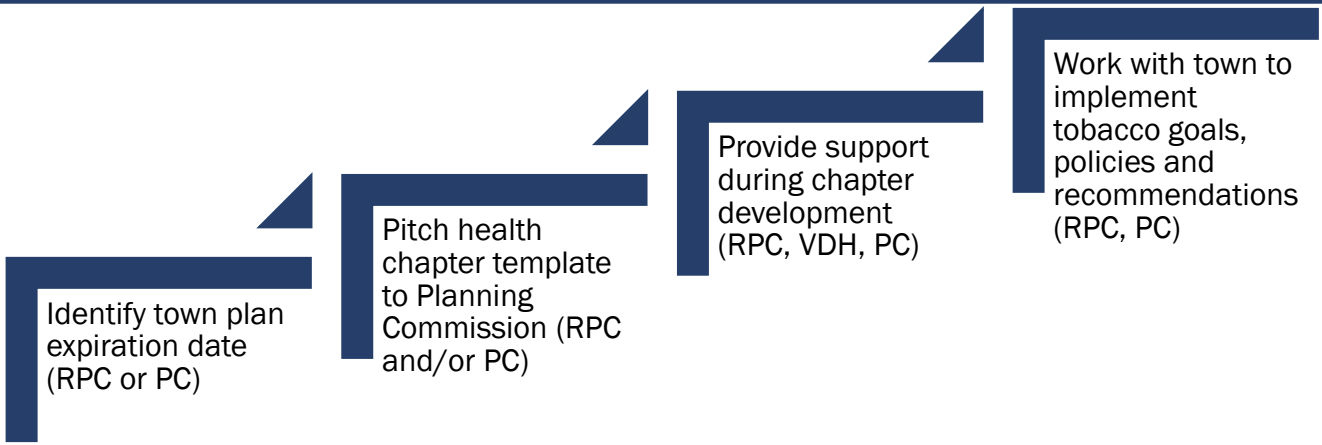
- MAPP
- TRORC and MARC
- Offices of Local Health in Springfield and Hartford

## Spreading Health Chapter Coverage in Windsor County

24 towns in Windsor County



## Steps: From Town Plan to Policy Change



# TOBACCO RETAILER SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION

In FY22 we developed a Retailer Resource Packet initiative to connect more deeply with Lamoille Valley retailers. The packet is robust and was created through collaboration with a local retail partner. This retailer is one of our most supportive and longstanding retail partners, yet failed two tobacco compliance checks this year.

Through conversations with the store owner and clerks, followed by our continued support and resource development, this specific retailer and all of our region's stores will benefit. For example, to empower clerks to ask patrons for identification, we collaboratively created small signs with the theme, "We card because we care" and "Top 5 reasons we card" to display at the register and in napkin holders at the store. We also shared the idea of a tobacco sticker shock to reduce youth access to tobacco products and received feedback on the size of the stickers for cigarette and vape packaging. A youth coalition member designed the stickers. In addition to educating the public to not share tobacco products with youth, the 21+ stickers on the tobacco products regularly remind store clerks to ask for age identification. As a result of these conversations, we also ordered digital calendars that assist with age verification from the FDA's *This is Our Watch Campaign*. It was noted that many convenience store clerks are young adults who smoke or vape, leading us to share general youth resources and cessation resources. We continue to offer support and collaborate on strategies on this retailer/workplace initiative to benefit multiple stakeholders in our community.

#### Our retailer packets include the following:

- Intro poster to Healthy Lamoille Valley
- Retailer letter that includes retailer education on how equity plays into selling tobacco as substances are often marketed to minority and high risk populations, and how tobacco may impact their employees, customers and community
- An overview of what we can provide retailers
- Retailer best practices (HLV Retail connector)
- 3-4-50 information and how to become a partner
- Signs (We card because we care, Top 5 reasons we card)
- Posters (Youth resources, quit resources, DLL new resources, 5 ways to manage pain without a prescription and opioid hope cards)
- Tobacco sticker shock (2 stickers- one for cigarette packs, the other for vape devices), youth resource stickers, 802 quits stickers)
- Cup sleeves with Parent UP and HLV resources
- Digital age verification device

## We Card Because We Care!



Keeping area youth safe and substance free!



## Top 5 Reasons We Card

1. We care about youth safety.
2. We can lose our license if we sell to minors.
3. The staff and store get fined if we fail a compliance check
4. We are a Healthy Lamoille Valley Coalition Member!
5. It's our job!



## Success Story - 2022

# HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH PEER-BASED TOBACCO TREATMENT

## GFC supports Tobacco Treatment Specialist training for Turning Point Recovery Center's Recovery Coaches

### ISSUE

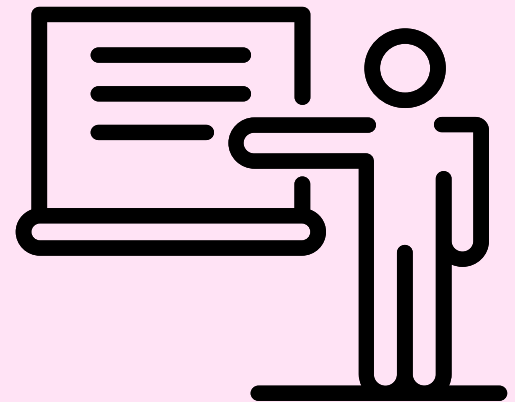


Community members in early recovery from substance use disorder (SUD) are reluctant to take the next steps toward quitting tobacco. Historically, nicotine addiction is the last addiction that people talk about, as nicotine is a tool of harm reduction.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Greater Falls Connections has been working with Turning Point Recovery Center of Springfield for several years to increase access to tobacco treatment services among those with SUD. After attending a workshop with a coalition in Massachusetts, we were inspired by the idea of community members from historically marginalized populations - and most at risk for adverse impacts related to the tobacco use - to provide peer-based cessation supports.

Through our work together on our regional Tobacco Action Group (TAG), our coalition of SUD recovery coaches and the regional self-management program reduced silos in order to support access to treatment services needed by our most vulnerable community members.



### ACTION STEPS & OUTCOMES

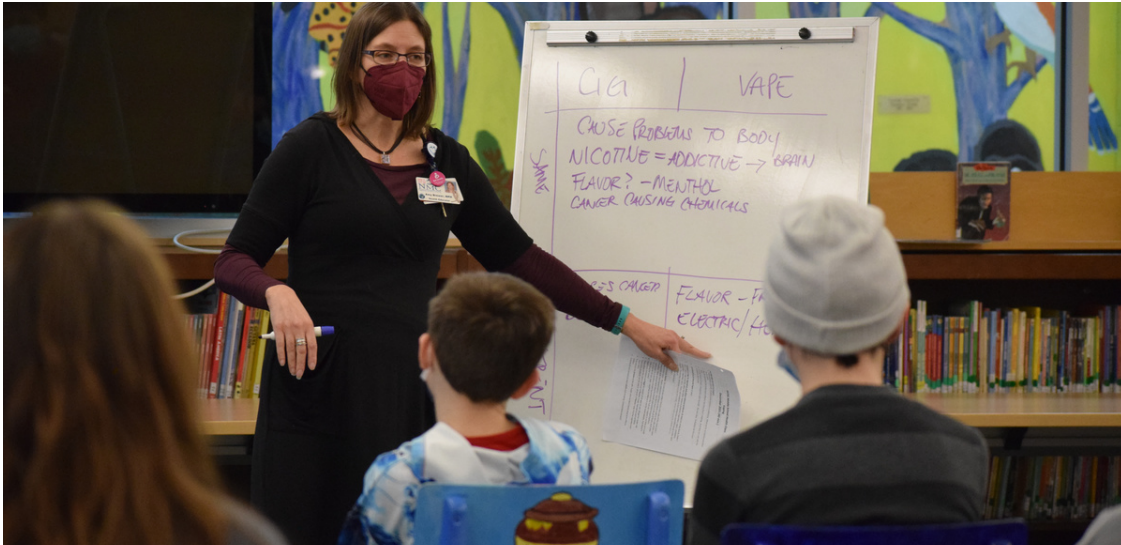


In collaboration with the Vermont Tobacco Control Program and our local health care system, North Star Health, we identified the appropriate training and mentoring that would be needed in order for Turning Point Recovery Coaches to become certified Tobacco Treatment Specialists (TTS). North Star Health agreed to mentor the recovery coaches following the training and help them complete the steps to become fully certified TTS. North Star Health and Turning Point agreed in the next year to lead a quit class together through the Recovery Center.

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# Youth Engagement FY23



## MAPLE RUN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Overview

- YOUTH & FAMILY PRESENTATIONS**
- YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**
- LGBTQ+ DISCUSSIONS**

FGI TPC partnered with MRUSD in 2 middle schools and 1 high school to reach more students to raise awareness of the harms of vaping.

### Reaching More Middle School Students

We've previously presented to 5-8th grades at St. Albans Town Educational Center (SATEC), but this year, we presented to all 7/8th graders at City School as well as 5th & 8th graders at SATEC.



FRANKLIN GRAND ISLE  
**TOBACCO  
PREVENTION  
COALITION**



### Ah Ha! Moments:

Students universally had NOT heard of MLMQ, thought vaping was as dangerous/harmful as cigarettes, and talked about stress as a motivator to vape.





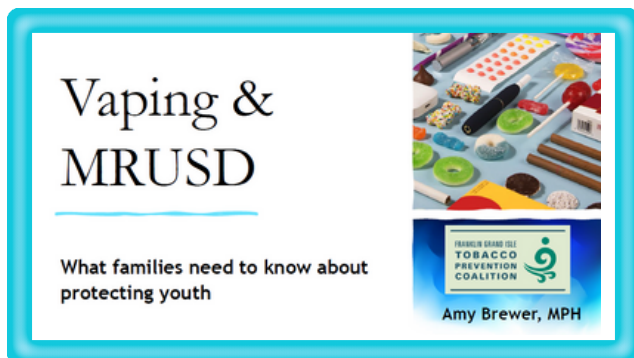
## Focus on Cessation with BFA St. Albans Students

Tabled 5 lunchtimes over 5 weeks to talk vaping cessation and perception of harm with HS students. Played "Wheel of Health," "Jeopardy," & "You Tell Me."

## GSA Groups

Met with GSA groups at BFA St. Albans & St. Albans Town Educational Center to listen to their concerns and talk about how vaping/nicotine impacts them uniquely.

Learned how positively Spectrum Youth & Family is regarded and followed up with them!



## Parent Presentation - Virtual

Although participation was limited, City School hosted me for a virtual presentation. It was recorded and shared.

### Contact Us

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# NO BUTTS ABOUT IT! PROJECT EXPANSION WITHIN TWO COALITIONS

By: Elisha Underwood and Kayla Jager

## CHALLENGE:

In the West River Valley we are finding cigarette waste receptacles lacking, and those that do exist are often overflowing and too close in proximity to entrances and patrons of the establishment. According to the 2019 YRBS in Windham County, 29% of students have smoked cigarettes or cigars or used smokeless tobacco or electronic vapor products, and 51% of students in Windham County have tried to quit all tobacco products within the past year. These stats support the importance of doing community inventories/scans of the environments that those who are trying to quit are exposed to.

## SUMMARY:

Deerfield Valley Community Partnership and West River Valley Thrives have been addressing the problem of cigarette butt litter. This work is thanks to the collaboration of middle/high school prevention groups, community members and local business owners. Both coalitions have played an active role in addressing the problem of toxic cigarette waste by identifying heavy litter areas and reaching out to the appropriate community members to install cigarette receptacles called Butlers. This year, our collective groups were able to expand awareness of this issue to more business owners, involving more students like Vermont Kids Against Tobacco (VKAT), Our Voices Xposed (OVX), and Boys Scouts from BSA Troop 428. Incorporating a balance of education and community intervention has made this program a growing success. Important community connections have been forged and butlers abound!

## SOLUTION :

With all the proper gear to make the clean up a sanitary process, students and community members participated in Butt litter clean ups. Folks first confirmed high traffic smoking areas by collecting cigarette butts, which also improved the community outdoor spaces. Next steps included sharing what they learned about the environmental impacts of cigarette litter and how to reduce that impact by installing a Butler to collect cigarette butts. The icing on the cake is the fact that, once collected, these butts can actually be recycled by mailing them to a Vermont-based recycling organization, Terracycle. The project was publicly highlighted and results were published in the local newspaper, social media, and newsletters. The butlers include the 802 Quit hotline and our coalitions' logos to provide cessation resources broadly. DVCP and WRVT promote their use, and monitor and manage their collections.



**RESULTS:**

Student participation from Leland and Gray Middle and High School in the project grew from having the students participate in the butt litter clean up to student participation in the installation of the butlers at the retailer sites and speaking to the store owners directly. Jacob an OVX club student from Leland and Gray stated “I feel like the community will see what we are really about. This gives us visibility. It tells people we aren’t just about giving people resources to quit but that we care about helping our community and environment to be healthy.” The education for the project expanded from doing press releases about the project to including student led classroom presentations about the benefits of the campaign and providing materials to their 20 peers in science and health classes. One VKAT club participant from Leland and Gray named Ella stated “This was a fun project that made me feel like I was helping my community and encouraging others to take care of the environment.” In Wilmington and Dover, DVCP installed a total of 21 butlers this year and have talked to the business owners to either move existing butler locations or adding additional butlers to the sites.

**SUSTAINABILITY:**

This campaign is truly an all hands on deck approach to spreading prevention in our communities. Our coalitions strive to develop and strengthen our youth and community members' sense of place and power in their towns. The butt litter cleanup and butler installation are examples of folks taking the well being of their community into their own hands. This project allows us to educate and form a solution in partnership with the store owner/management and dedicated youth in the community. It also allows an opportunity and a relationship to be built that could lead to potential worksite wellness policies to be implemented.



## “How can I help?”:

Learn more about how Terracycle recycles objects of all kinds into useful and beautiful things like park benches! For more information visit: [www.terracycle.com](http://www.terracycle.com)

As a business...consider hosting a sidewalk butler at your site, and help us promote its use.

As a person who smokes... Please help us keep Vermont green! Help us recycle cigarette butts by using designated sidewalk butlers to dispose of your cigarettes.

Community members... become part of our “collection team” to keep cigarette butts out of the trash stream.

**Contact**

West River Valley Thrives: [wrvthrives@gmail.com](mailto:wrvthrives@gmail.com)

Deerfield Valley Community Partnership: [info@dvcp.org](mailto:info@dvcp.org)

**SHOUT OUT to BARRE  
YOUTH for  
SPEAKING OUT ABOUT  
VAPING**



Spring 2022

### **TAKING ACTION**

It didn't take long for Becca McKelvey to think up a plan and start the steps to getting the word out about vaping to her school community. CVNDC Prevention Coordinator, Will Roberts, met with OVX Advisors Dawn Poitras and PJ LaPerle in November 2021 to offer collaboration from the community coalition to the OVX and SADD student groups at Spaulding High School in Barre, Vermont. The idea was suggested that CVNDC interview an interested student on a topic, create a podcast, and share this in the school newsletter and in health classes at school. This is when Becca expressed interest and initiative to meet and get going on a plan about the topic of her choice—Vaping.

### **CHALLENGES DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Times turned out to be so busy and chaotic with Covid, the start of vaccinating students, and disrupted schedules at school. The initial meeting and discussion between Becca, a junior at Spaulding, and CVNDC was finally able to happen before the holiday break but wasn't able to resume until after the New Year 2022.

Becca continued to face the challenges of school vacations, her varsity sports schedule, the limitations of meeting in person during Covid, and the demands of academics.

### **CREATING THE PODCAST**

Working together through phone calls and zoom meetings to plan and implement a school survey, Becca came up with the questions she wished to pose to her peers in order to obtain current opinion and vaping usage since she felt things were changing since the YRBS survey data from 2019. It was clear that students were still vaping and it was a problem at her school. Survey questions were developed and approved by her OVX advisor and the administration and then surveys were available to students.

Using the information obtained from her survey, Becca collaborated with CVNDC to write and edit the script on vaping. They recorded the podcast at school but needed additional editing to improve the sound quality which was originally muffled from wearing a mask!



## A SUCCESSFUL TOOL

The podcast created proved to be a successful tool to raise awareness and inform the community about vaping. This was an effective and fun way to reach parents and the school community to inform about school survey data on current use, the health effects of vaping, and strategies for resisting peer pressure and peer presence.

The podcast link was shared in the school newsletter for the entire community of families to access online.

Listen to Podcast here on Buzzsprout:

<https://newdirections.buzzsprout.com/share>

This podcast project is new for Rebecca and her OVX group and helped to inspire ideas for future topics.

## BARRE OVX IS AWARDED ON PREVENTION DAY

The OVX group at Spaulding High School has a track record for engaging youth who are committed to collaborating with community partners and sharing their information about tobacco products. Recognition came at Prevention Day when this group, led by Dawn Poitras, received the OVX award for Community Collaboration.

The Barre group has been remarkable in achieving success in community outreach by staying strong and figuring out how they can continue their work during this challenging time of the pandemic.

Highlights include working with Song Nguyen on speaking with the Legislature on tobacco and vaping

issues since the youth voice is so vital and very effective when informing policy makers; the creation and completion of the podcast; and Becca McKelvey's role as a key leader at the OVX Rally and march to the Statehouse where she delivered a strong message to the 70 students representing 14 schools from around Vermont.

This group is so fortunate to have the years of experience and the strong leadership skills of their advisor, Dawn Poitras, who has kept this group going and supports each members' interests and abilities as she offers ideas for networking with the community which the group has embraced.

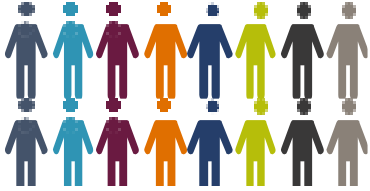
Central Vermont New Directions Coalition sees a strong ongoing partnership with Spaulding OVX members and appreciates the opportunity and the willingness to collaborate on projects.



# The Collaborative Readily Responds to High School's TA Request

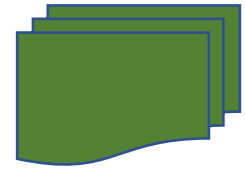
Returning from hybrid to in-person learning, a high school seeks technical assistance to address increased on campus vaping infractions

## Students



We've worked with one Manchester Center high school serving approximately 777 students from 13 area towns in 4 Vermont Counties: Windsor, Windham, Rutland, and Bennington. 8 main campus buildings dedicated to academics, arts and sports.

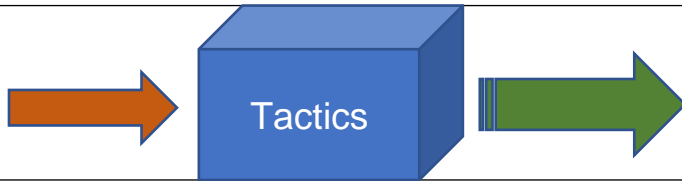
## Data



At start of the 2021 academic year, increased number of students were presenting with cardiac and other medical symptoms. According to 2019 YRBS Bennington County data, 32% of high school students reported "currently using an electronic vapor product" compare to the State average of 26%.

The school's student handbook outlines ATOD possession and use consequences including in-school and out of school suspensions and extracurricular expectations and consequences for violations. The high school reported engaging in punitive consequences for ATOD infractions. We conducted 10 virtual planning and educational meetings with the school, restorative justice, and the district attorney.

## Tactics



The high school engages and elevates comprehension of restorative justice and prosocial orientation. Provide school with wholistic approach: student, family, school acknowledging capacity limitations within each system. School goals include increased education for student, to administer and write the pre-charge ticket and resources for student and families.

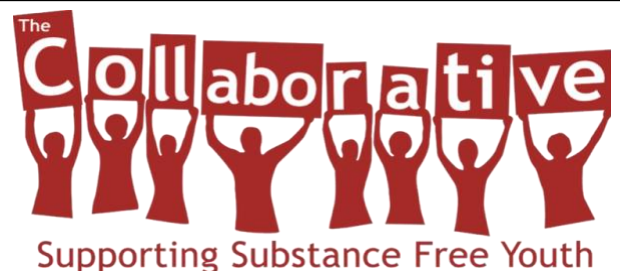
The Collaborative (TC) drafts logic model outlining behaviors and related challenges; risks and protective factors; interventions; short and long term goals. TC creates process and procedural flowcharts for different infraction scenarios. Each flowchart includes school meeting with school's dean and health departments, alternative to suspension curriculum and or Nicotine E-checkup, meeting with CRJ, and cessation.

ASK of school: identify goals of addressing behaviors and related challenges.

## Future



Reduce use and possession and risk of harm to self and school community. Create new norm in support of restorative process.





## BTV Interactive Story Map Tool

### Using Community Design & Local Policy to Prevent Substance Misuse & Keep Kids Safe

**Summary:** Throughout FY22, the BPHC team worked with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) to complete an interactive website that utilized local retail assessment data aimed at mapping adult-use only products in the city of Burlington.

Please visit & engage with with our Story Map Tool at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/dd4f6134e7b34282bd8efafa24976c18>

**Challenge:** Burlington kids need an environment that supports them to remain substance-free while their brains are still developing. Promotion and easy access to substances in communities has been shown to increase high-risk use and the development of substance use disorders (addiction). Addiction is an adolescent disease. The earlier people start using any substance the more likely they are to develop problem use.

**Solution:** The purpose of this project was to provide BTV residents, policymakers, parents, caregivers, and community stakeholders with up-to-date information about alcohol, tobacco, and (shortly) cannabis product promotion, location, and density in order to inform healthy community design. Through this tool, BPHC provided recommendations for ways the community can engage in making Burlington a safer place to live, grow, and thrive.

**Roll Out & Implementation:** We created a robust public launch through press releases and other earned media efforts. These efforts were heavily featured in Quarter 3, with promotion for the tool appearing in Burlington's North Avenue News. Communications Coordinator Evan connected with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of VT to discuss potential opportunities to include information about the BTV Story Map in an upcoming issue of their member newsletter. Simultaneously, Coalition Director, Mariah Flynn continued to share the tool in prevention work groups, regional action teams, Burlington Neighborhood Planning Association meetings, and among the Burlington School District & School Board. Furthermore, the tool was featured in BPHC's March 2022 e-newsletter to subscribers and our partner listserv with an emphasis placed on the impact of tobacco and cannabis vaping.

**Sustainable Success:** BPHC continues to try to work with the Department of Liquor & Lottery to update tobacco, alcohol, and soon, retail cannabis location & density to maintain the most up to date maps possible for this tool. In FY23, we will continue to share the Story Map in community spaces and with Burlington-serving organizations.



Also, 67% of retailers in BTV had inside advertising for alcohol, compared to the VT average of 59%.



Comprehensive Plan	Healthy Retailers	Regulatory	Taxes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include language in the Burlington Comprehensive Plan that makes a commitment to supporting health and wellness through community design, local policy and infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage retailers to place tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis ads. above 3 ft.</li> <li>• Adult-only products should not be placed on the counter or within 3 feet of candy or gum.</li> <li>• Post health warning signs about substances in prominent locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrict adult-only retailers within 1,000 ft of schools and youth-serving organizations.</li> <li>• Limit the number of adult-only retailers in a given area to reduce density of such retailers.</li> <li>• Adopt an ordinance that prohibits use of alcohol, tobacco, and/or cannabis in public places and at certain community events - particularly family-friendly event.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase local taxes on adult-only products and use the funding to support pro-social resources for youth and families.</li> </ul>



**SUMMARY:** Thrives increased youth engagement at Leland and Gray Middle/High School in response to high rates of vaping on campus. Thrives staff employed youth voices in creating initiatives that students deemed appropriate and effective. Students met weekly throughout the 21-22 school year. The group expanded in size and became more engaged and invested as the school year progressed. The work culminated in a final project that inspired the group's work for launching sustainable campaigns and actions for the upcoming 22-23 school year.

**CHALLENGE:** According to the Windham Central Supervisory Union 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey 30-day past tobacco use, 36% of students said that they have used electronic Vapor products which is 10% higher than the State average. In addition, 29% of all Windham Central students reported they do not have one or more teachers that they can talk to if they have a problem. Meanwhile, teachers are reporting decreased social emotional skill levels, inability of students to focus, decreased engagement during extracurricular activities and low attendance. Other staff report that, due to increased isolation from the pandemic, socialization skills decreased, and trust students had previously formed with caring adults such as the SAP was compromised. Consequently, the level of students who needed support increased, while willingness to accept support and resources decreased.

**SOLUTION:**

Thrives began a new student group focused on nicotine prevention at the beginning of the 21-22 school year. This core group held an open house inviting the entire middle school to explore the Thrives office and ask questions about our work and about student engagement opportunities in our organization. This event was successful in recruiting new members. This newly formed group's campaigns included: education on tobacco media and marketing; statewide policy work through a letter-writing campaign to educate the health impacts of flavored nicotine products and the tobacco industry's targeting of youth and BIPOC communities. Students made an impact on school policy by providing smoke/vape free signage and a space for activities focused on emotional regulation at a Middle School Spring Fling event and interactive educational events at lunchtime for their peers. Additionally, a trip to the Vermont Statehouse in Montpelier to meet with legislators and other prevention groups from around the state expanded the students' understanding that this is a larger movement of which they are a part. This served to increase their sense of purpose and place in tobacco prevention.

The campaigns at the end of the school year brought an increased focus and determination to the group. Students participated in connecting their school community to their towns through a Butt Litter Clean Up and Butler Installation project. One participating student stated "I feel like the community will see what we are really about. This gives us visibility. It tells people we aren't just about giving people resources to quit but that we care about helping our community and environment to be healthy." Students then presented these projects to their peers in health and science classes and provided materials to complete the project themselves. In addition to the school-based outreach, Thrives collaborated with an after school Scout Troop on nicotine prevention to expand reach. Students connected with retailers in their own community on nicotine prevention campaigns. One of these local retailers highlighted the group's work via social media. Students also presented to retailers where these projects were implemented. Retailers in our areas are now aware of the student prevention group, what they do and how they can be involved as a direct result of this student action.

**RESULTS:**

Student participation grew from 5-15 members over the course of the 21-22 school year. Students shifted their focus from team building with one another to planning events and

initiatives to respond to the issues they see in their school and community regarding vaping. The new connections with the after-school scout troop expanded the community's understanding of this group's mission and impact. Thrives was able to hire a paid intern during the spring semester to help with student-based social media accounts to increase online youth engagement with peer-created messages. In every Thrives Newsletter, youth initiatives are highlighted increasing their sense of place, pride, and purpose.

**SUSTAINING:** The students agreed to form a high school prevention group that collaborates with the middle school prevention group for the upcoming school year. Their focus will continue to be responding to high rates of vaping in school. Their action plan is as follows:

1. attend school board meetings,
2. have weekly tabling on each level of the school providing resources
3. join a statewide committee focused on policy
4. accept the school administration's invitation to join the newly formed vape task force and attend meetings to affect school policy on vaping.