

Contact: Nicole Dueffert
202-454-5589
ndueffert@truthinitiative.org

NEW SURVEY SHOWS SMOKING AMONG TEENS AT HISTORIC LOWS AND DRAMATIC DECLINES IN VAPING

Disparities in Tobacco Use Across the Country Still Need to Be Addressed

STATEMENT OF ROBIN KOVAL, CEO AND PRESIDENT OF TRUTH INITIATIVE, ON THE 2016 NATIONAL YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY RESULTS

The National Youth Tobacco Survey results, released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), show that we are well on our way to finishing smoking for good. The dramatically low numbers of eight percent for past 30-day cigarette use by high school students, a significant decline of 1.3 percentage points from 2015 and a 4.7 percentage point decrease since 2013, are no accident and show the combined power of public-education campaigns targeted to youth, like **truth**[®] and the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) The Real Cost campaign as well as the CDC's "Tips From Former Smokers."

The data also show an incredible 4.7 percentage point decline in high school e-cigarette prevalence, now at 11.3 percent vs. 16 percent in 2015. While the number of high school students who use e-cigarettes is still too high, this rapid decline is a positive indicator that much youth e-cigarette use has been experimental and that the current offering of products may be less appealing to youth than feared. However, with rapid and continuous innovation in electronic nicotine products taking place, the results underscore the urgency for full implementation of FDA regulation of e-cigarettes to maintain this momentum in preventing all use of nicotine products by young people.

Despite this good news on a national basis, the total tobacco product use for high school students (20.2 percent) is still too high and the patterns of youth tobacco use across the U.S. remain very uneven. We must not forget there are many states in this country where the numbers tell a different story. Where you live, how much money and privilege you have makes a big difference in whether you smoke. The high school smoking rate in West Virginia is more than double the rate in California. LGBTQ young adults smoke at twice the rate of the average population, and individuals with mental illness account for 40 percent of cigarettes smoked in the U.S.

The data released today are another battle won for public health in the long effort to end the epidemic that still kills 540,000 people a year in our country. At the same time, it is no doubt an alarm for the tobacco industry who continue to spend \$9.1 billion a year to market their deadly products and aggressively oppose federal, state and local efforts to curtail tobacco use. The industry now has added incentive to continue to adapt their products and tactics especially among their "best customers" in effort to find the more than 1,300 replacement smokers to fill the gap left by those who will die each day from tobacco-use. We have made significant progress in bringing both youth and adult smoking rates to historic lows. Now is the time to dedicate our efforts to making sure that no population or geography is left behind in our endeavor to claim what could be the most important public-health victory in modern times for our nation.

About Truth Initiative

Truth Initiative® is a national public-health organization that is inspiring tobacco-free lives and building a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**® public-education campaign, our rigorous and scientific research and policy studies, and our innovative community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco. The Washington, D.C.-based organization, formerly known as Legacy, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more about our work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit truthinitiative.org.

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