



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

MDI hosts roundtable discussion

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce recently selected MDI to host a roundtable discussion focused on the importance of utilizing "Hidden Talent Pools". Attendees included MDI, Senator Justin Eichorn, Representative Sandy Layman, Senator Paul Anderson, IRRRB, MN Chamber,

Twin Metals Minnesota, and support staff. "It's important to recognize and encourage talented individuals including those with disabilities," said Peter McDermott, president and CEO of MDI. "We want to connect workers with the skills and tools they need to

succeed and be productive where they're at – in the workforce and in the community. Finding these hidden talent pools is key to building a successful workforce. When they succeed, we all succeed."



Quitting vaping tough for teens: 'It's gonna suck'

BY DANA FERGUSON
FORUM NEWS SERVICE

ST. PAUL — The road to breaking e-cigarette addictions can be tough, especially for kids and teens in Minnesota.

Stigma and fear around telling family and friends or asking for help can delay important conversations, teens who've kicked their vaping addictions said, and those under 18 can't legally access nicotine replacement products like nicotine gum or patches without a prescription or help from an adult.

As record numbers of Minnesota students report they've used vaping products, health officials said they're doing what they can to support teens who want to quit. But there aren't perfect solutions yet to do that.

"To quit, you just have to go cold turkey when you're a kid. You can't use Nicorette gum, you can't use patches because you can't buy them," Claire Hering, a junior at Hopkins High School who'd recently quit vaping, said. "You have to be 18, so it was this whole battle for me to try to figure out how to get myself help without getting in trouble."

The discussion came up Wednesday, Dec. 4, as state officials announced that Attorney General Keith Ellison sued Juul Labs, the e-cigarette manufacturer, alleging deceptive marketing directed at Minnesota kids.

The state is seeking financial damages from the company to cover education campaigns, cessation treatments and funding to compensate people who'd experienced vaping-related injuries or addiction.

A state student survey found that vaping among Minnesota teens jumped between 2016 and 2019, with 54 percent more 11th graders reporting they'd vaped within the last 30 days in the most recent survey. The increase in youth e-cigarette use turned a 10-year trend of decreasing rates of tobacco rates among Minnesota teens. And physicians report that they've seen a dramatic uptick in teens with nicotine addiction stemming from the vaping products. "They have bought into the presentation and the marketing of the

products as harmless alternatives to cigarettes or harmless products suitable for children," Minnesota Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm said. And on the cessation side, doctors still don't have optimal research-based protocols to help wean them off the vaping products. "Our cessation strategies have been geared toward adults, not kids."

Children's Minnesota pediatric pulmonologist Dr. Anne Griffiths said teens with vaping-related lung infections who come into her hospital have said their time in inpatient treatment provides an opportunity to kick the addictions. But outside, many said they struggled to get off of e-cigarettes.

"We don't have great ways to manage their addiction and their addiction is really strong. These are really high doses, large volumes that they inhale," Griffiths said. "We're bootstrapping our treatment and our therapies based on adult treatment."

The long-term impacts of nicotine addiction from vaping devices are not yet clear, but Griffiths said there could be additional mental health impacts like increased levels of anxiety and depression.

"I'm really worried about the long-term effects in terms of what those products might do, but also in terms of the addiction pathway it's creating," she said.

Hering and peer Will Gitler, a senior at Hopkins High School, said they had a hard time asking for help when they decided to quit vaping. And both recommended that other teens seek support from parents, friends, medical professionals or help services offered free of charge.

And they acknowledged that it would be a challenge for peers aiming to end their addictions.

"It's gonna suck. It's gonna suck so bad," Hering said. "But it's worth it to say you can go a day without nicotine, you can go a day without inhaling something into your body."

Resources for those aiming to quit vaping:

QUITPlan Services: 1-888-354-PLAN (7526) or <https://www.quitplan.com/>

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