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## Florida Youth Launch Statewide Observance to Combat Youth E-Cigarette Use



***Students Working Against Tobacco Set Oct. 17 as “Not a Lab Rat Day”***

**Contact:**

Steve Sergent, SWAT Coordinator  
Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County  
[Steven.Sergent@FLHealth.gov](mailto:Steven.Sergent@FLHealth.gov)  
(727) 588-4040, ext. 3158

Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), Florida’s statewide youth-led movement to combat the tobacco industry, announced the first-ever statewide observance to tackle youth electronic cigarette use. This year on Wednesday, Oct. 17, **Not a Lab Rat Day** will empower youth to stand up to the e-cigarette industry and declare that they are not “Lab Rats” in discovering the harms and addictiveness of these products.

SWAT chapters across the state will hold events at their schools and communities during the week of Oct. 17 to dispel myths and educate their peers on the truth about e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). In Pinellas County, the local SWAT clubs will participate in various activities that empower them to let their voices be heard.

Some of the common myths are that e-cigarettes do not contain nicotine,<sup>1</sup> that e-cigarettes are less addictive than conventional cigarettes,<sup>2</sup> and that e-cigarettes are completely harmless.

The fact is that most e-cigarettes do contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s. Additionally, e-cigarette aerosol is not harmless. It can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including heavy metals like lead, volatile organic compounds, and cancer-causing agents.<sup>3</sup> Scientists are still learning about the long-term health effects of e-cigarettes.

Participants in **Not a Lab Rat Day** events across the state will be encouraged to complete statement cards stating that they will not be “Lab Rats” for the e-cigarette industry. Youth will mail out their statements to headquarters of major e-cigarette companies to show their refusal to accept industry tactics.

“Many of my peers have been influenced by false or misleading information about e-cigarettes,” said Sachit Gali, Statewide Chair of SWAT. “Teaching youth the truth about e-cigarettes can prevent a lifetime of nicotine dependence and unknown health effects.”

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently declared e-cigarette use among teens a national “epidemic of addiction.” In Florida, the youth (ages 11-17) rate of current e-cigarette use increased 60.2 percent in just one year – from 9.8 percent in 2017 to 15.7 percent in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

Youth use of nicotine in any form is unsafe, can cause addiction and can harm the developing adolescent brain, according to a 2016 Surgeon General’s report.<sup>5</sup>

### **About Not a Lab Rat Day**

Not a Lab Rat Day will be observed annually on the third Wednesday of October to bring awareness to e-cigarette use among youth, encourage youth to stand up against Big Tobacco and the e-cigarette industry, and to push for change within their communities.

### **About Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)**

SWAT is Florida’s statewide youth organization working to mobilize, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against and de-glamorize Big Tobacco and the e-cigarette industry. SWAT is a united movement of empowered youth working towards a tobacco free future.

To learn more about Students Working Against Tobacco, visit [www.swatflorida.com](http://www.swatflorida.com) or follow us on Instagram at [@swatflorida](https://www.instagram.com/swatflorida) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/swatflorida).

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<sup>1</sup>Johnston, L. D., O’Malley, P. M., Miech, R. A., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2017). Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2016: Overview, key findings on adolescent drug use. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen M Amrock, Lily Lee, Michael Weitzman Pediatrics Oct 2016, e20154306; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2015-4306

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. E-cigarette use among youth and young adults: a report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2018

<sup>5</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. E-cigarette use among youth and young adults: a report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2016.