Dear Health Care Provider:

Despite a New York City (NYC) law that prohibits the sale of tobacco products and e-cigarettes to anyone under age 21, the use of e-cigarettes and other tobacco products among youth has increased. In 2017, smokeless tobacco use among NYC public high school students increased from 1.1% in 2001 to 4%, while e-cigarette use among this group was an alarming 17.3%.\(^1\) In 2016, youth hookah use was 9%.\(^2\)

Additionally, more than 100,000 NYC children ages 12 and younger are exposed to secondhand smoke from people smoking inside their homes,\(^3\) putting these children at greater risk for asthma attacks, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and respiratory and ear infections.\(^4\) Children are also exposed to harmful chemicals from non-cigarette products, such as e-cigarettes and hookah.

As a health care provider, you play a critical role in preventing and treating tobacco, e-cigarette and other alternative product use (including hookah and cannabis) among your patients and their families. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Department) urges you to:

1. Screen patients of all ages for exposure to tobacco smoke and vaping aerosol. Educate parents and guardians on the importance of protecting children's health and how children can resist peer pressure.

2. Starting at age 5, provide education and counseling at every visit to prevent initiation of tobacco, e-cigarette and other alternative product use.

3. Beginning at age 10, screen for tobacco, e-cigarette and other alternative product use. To encourage disclosure, ask parents and guardians to leave the exam room when age-appropriate.

4. Develop a treatment plan for children and their families that includes counseling, pharmacotherapy (as needed) and follow-up.

This action kit contains clinical tools, provider resources and patient education materials to help you educate your patients and their families about the harms of tobacco and e-cigarettes and how to prevent initiation. Your Health Department representative is available to discuss ways to integrate these tools into your practice.

Working together, we can improve the health of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

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