

Metro **Public Health Dept** N a s h v i l l e / D a v i d s o n C o u n t y

Position Statement: Electronic Cigarettes

The increasing popularity of electronic nicotine delivery systems, including electronic cigarettes, poses serious questions about the safety of these devices, particularly for young people. There is a lack of peer-reviewed research to prove whether or not these products or their by-products are safe for users and others exposed to them.

Preliminary research from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) found that some e- cigarettes contain toxic substances and cancer-causing agents. The FDA has further warned e-cigarette manufacturers not to portray their products as nicotine replacement therapy for tobacco smokers because there is no proof of e-cigarettes' safety and effectiveness. There are existing nicotine replacement therapies the FDA already has approved. Further, the FDA announced in 2011 it intended to regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products, but those regulations have yet to be issued. In the absence of such regulation, there are no controls whatsoever on the types or amounts of ingredients used in these products.

The Metropolitan Board of Health is concerned that in addition to their possibly harmful direct effects, e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems may be used to create nicotine dependence among non-smokers, particularly young people, and become the unregulated portal through which tobacco companies reach their next generation of "replacement smokers."

A study released by the Centers for Disease Control in September 2013 showed that 10 percent of middle- and high-school-aged students had tried electronic cigarettes in 2012, more than double the rate of the previous year. Many e-cigarettes are offered in fruit and candy flavors that appear targeted at young people, and these products are readily available online, at mall kiosks, and at local retailers. Moreover, e-cigarettes are advertised on television, a powerful medium from which tobacco advertisements long have been banned.

There are clearly important questions about e-cigarettes that are currently unanswered, and it is the Board of Health's position that legislators and regulators should default to and act upon an assumption of harmfulness until these products and their effects on both users and by-standers are fully understood.