



May 5, 2016

The American School Health Association (ASHA) applauds the President's signing into law the new FDA ruling extending its authority to all tobacco products. ASHA supports school health issues that tie to our mission statement, "to transform all schools into places where every student learns and thrives". Many of the new tobacco products, and the flavors used, are targeted to school-age students. ASHA fully supports the passage of this legislation as it aligns with the work ASHA members do.

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration finalized a rule extending its authority to all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, cigars, hookah tobacco and pipe tobacco, among others. This historic rule helps implement the bipartisan Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 and allows the FDA to improve public health and protect future generations from the dangers of tobacco use through a variety of steps, including restricting the sale of these tobacco products to minors nationwide.

Tobacco use is a significant public health threat. In fact, smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States and responsible for 480,000 deaths per year. While there has been a significant decline in the use of traditional cigarettes among youth over the past decade, their use of other tobacco products continues to climb. A recent survey supported by the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows current e-cigarette use among high school students has skyrocketed from 1.5 percent in 2011 to 16 percent in 2015 (an over 900 percent increase) and hookah use has risen significantly. In 2015, 3 million middle and high school students were current e-cigarette users, and data showed high school boys smoked cigars at about the same rate as cigarettes. Additionally, a joint study by the FDA and the National Institutes of Health shows that in 2013-2014, nearly 80 percent of current youth tobacco users reported using a flavored tobacco product in the past 30 days – with the availability of appealing flavors consistently cited as a reason for use.

Before today, there was no federal law prohibiting retailers from selling e-cigarettes, hookah tobacco or cigars to people under age 18. Today's rule changes that with provisions aimed at restricting youth access, which go into effect in 90 days.