



Lancaster County, SC Tackles Vaping Epidemic

Irini Guda, B.S. Public Health

Project Director, Upper Midlands Rural Health Network

Chairperson, Lancaster County Health and Wellness Commission



Lancaster County Health and Wellness Commission

- The purpose of the Health & Wellness Commission is to serve as an advisory body to county council and act as a coordinating and educational body for the people of Lancaster County in matters concerned with the health and well-being of the community.



Becoming Smoke-Free

- Smoke-free Ordinance #1167, effective March 1, 2013, that covers indoor workplaces, restaurants, and bars.
 - Biggest achievement working with county council until 2019.
- However, a bigger opportunity presented itself April 2019 for the county to reach the next level.



What's the next level?

- Aiming to become the first county in the state of South Carolina to be completely **tobacco-free**.





Why tobacco-free?

- “Tobacco-free” emphasizes the health of all, including the smokeless tobacco user. “Smoke-free” is primarily aimed at benefiting the health of non-smokers by reducing secondhand smoke exposure.
- “Tobacco-free” versus “smoke-free” helps eliminate loopholes that might be exposed by the tobacco industry.
 - The tobacco industry has begun marketing products that are both smokeless and spitless (e.g. snus, tablets, lozenges, and lotions), in an effort to gain consumers who cannot smoke in certain places due to smoke-free policies, but are not prohibited from using smokeless forms of tobacco, inadvertently increasing the use of other forms of tobacco.

Step 1: Connecting and Influencing Policymakers

- The Health & Wellness Commission decided to become more proactive in its involvement with Lancaster County Council.
 - Strategic/Annual Report
 - Attending council meetings
 - Involving council in projects/project updates
 - Continuous communication
- Once a better relationship was established, Lancaster County Council then inquired about the prevalence of vaping in the news, and if we plan to do something about it. They asked us to help in updating the ordinance to include e-cigarettes.

Tackling the vaping epidemic

- By becoming tobacco-free, we would be addressing the vaping epidemic because it's considered "vaping" not "smoking," thus "smoke-free" does not apply to e-cigarettes.
- We need partners to achieve this.





Step 2: Collaborating with State Agencies

- The SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) was also interested in seeing Lancaster's smoking policy updated.
- The Commission strategized with:
 - Public Health Educator, DHEC's Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control
 - Secondhand Smoke Protection Coordinator, DHEC's Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control
 - Smokefree SC

Step 3: Connecting Information

- The Commission worked with the DHEC coordinators to obtain proper language to update the county ordinance. The Commission then communicated their findings with the county administrator who relayed information to council.
- The ORDINANCE NO. 2019-1590 was updated on May 28, 2019. The new addition reads as follows:

Smoking means inhaling, exhaling, burning, or carrying any lighted cigar, cigarette, pipe, or other lighted tobacco product in any manner or in any form. **Smoking also includes the use of an Electronic Smoking Device, which means an electronic or battery-operated device, the use of which resembles smoking, that can be used to deliver nicotine or other substances to the person inhaling from the device.**



We're not done yet

- We are still striving to become completely tobacco-free.
- 3 entities that need to have tobacco-free policies for our county to become completely tobacco-free include:
 - University of South Carolina-Lancaster Campus
 - Lancaster County School District
 - Van Wyck (municipality)
 - All other municipalities are smoke-free



Step 4: Sharing Information

- The Commission wrote a MEMO to all three entities stating the following:
 - Vaping epidemic and its specific impact on youth and adolescents
 - County council's ordinance update
 - Our commitment to support these efforts
 - The statewide policy that was passed:
 - **Section [59-1-380](#). (A) By August 1, 2019, every local school district in the State shall adopt, implement, and enforce a written policy prohibiting at all times the use of any tobacco product or alternative nicotine product by any person in school buildings, in school facilities, on school campuses, and in or on any other school property owned or operated by the local school administrative unit. The policy also must prohibit the use of any tobacco product or alternative nicotine product by persons attending a school-sponsored event at a location not listed in this subsection when in the presence of students or school personnel or in an area where smoking or other tobacco use is otherwise prohibited by law.**

Results

- **University of South Carolina-Lancaster Campus is completely tobacco-free!**
 - The policy went into effect September 16, 2019.
 - USC Lancaster is one of the last USC campuses to adopt this policy.
 - Great win for the community!



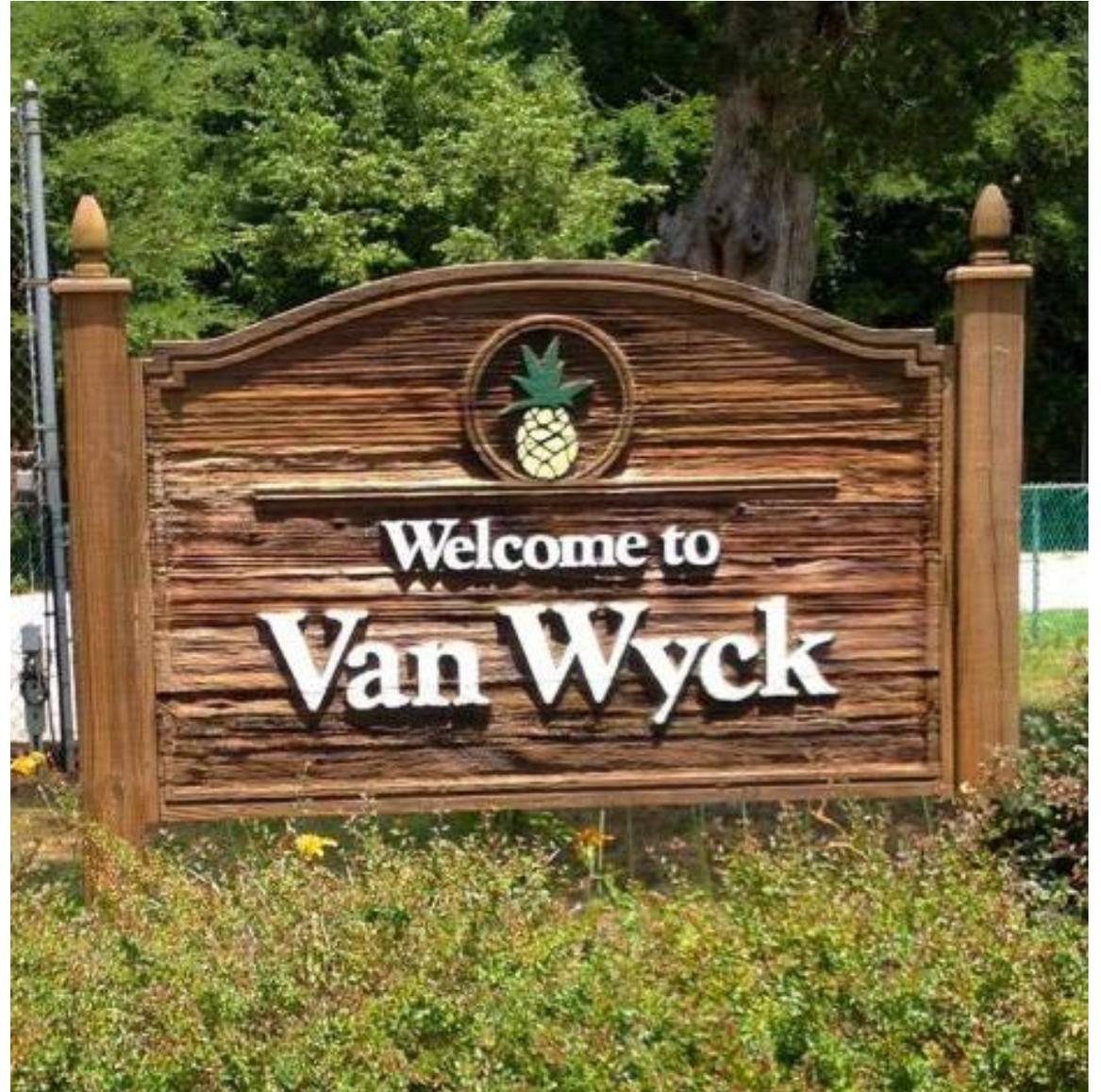
Results

- The MEMO received attention by the Lancaster County School District Superintendent.
- We are confident that the school district will closely follow in early 2020.
 - Tobacco-free policy headlines already listed on district website.
- Regarding state-wide policy:
 - The Department of Education took that over so DHEC cannot enforce it besides continued education. They are also unaware of actions the Dept. of Ed is taking against schools who have not passed. LSD is the only one left in the Midlands, but there are other school districts across SC that haven't passed yet either.



Results

- Van Wyck is the only municipality left that has not adopted a smoke-free policy yet.
- The Commission and SC DHEC has worked to follow-up with the town mayor.
 - DHEC's participation is strictly through the commission. They are not advocating, just educating.
- We are confident that the town will adopt a policy in 2020.





Challenges/Lessons Learned

- Passing first smoking ordinance vs. e-cigarette update.
 - Much more difficult to pass things when the public/council isn't quite on board.
 - However, we had to compromise on language used in e-cigarette update.
- Coverage in news about vaping helped our case.
- Collaborating with partners who have knowledge and influence helps to move things forward and legitimize the process.

2020 Goals

Become the first county in SC to become completely tobacco-free.

Ongoing communication with county council and state/local agency partners.

Work to decrease vaping levels among youth and adolescents through the sharing of resources and support/implementation of both preventative and tertiary vaping programs.



Note to HRSA

- Thank you, HRSA for granting us the Network Development grant. By funding key staff, it allows us to continue to do the important work, collaborate with partners, and address the needs of the community.

thank you