

Creating a Healthier New Mexico

Youth Advocacy in Action

Jackson Simpkins, Meade Pandya, and Rhys Romero

Eldorado HS, Piedra Vista HS, and Los Lunas High School



Evolverment is a statewide youth engagement movement funded by the Nicotine Use Prevention and Control (NUPAC) Program



5,700+ high school youth trained since 2010

TRADITIONAL VS COMMERCIAL



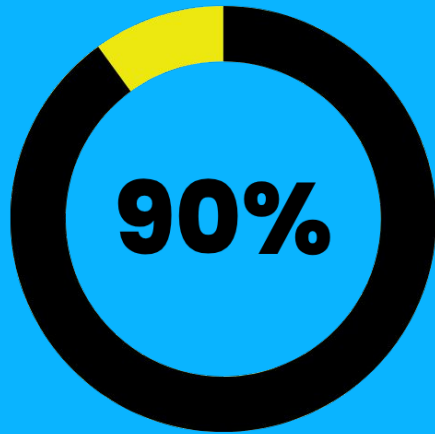
TRADITIONAL or
CEREMONIAL TOBACCO



COMMERCIAL TOBACCO

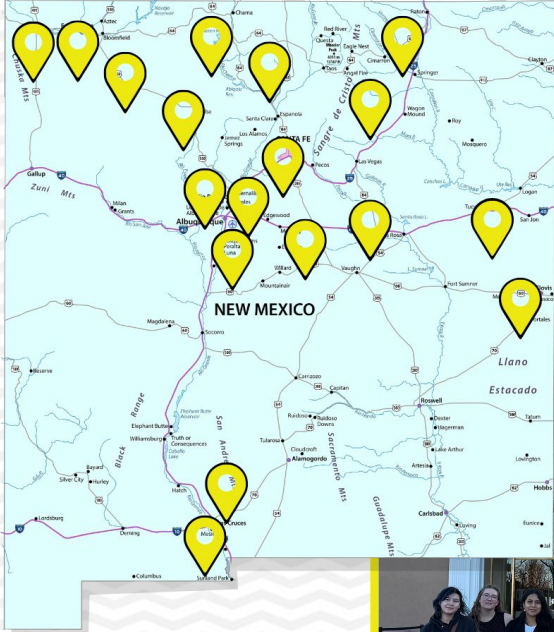
In Evolvment, we focus on commercial tobacco control.

1 in 5 high schoolers
in **New Mexico**
report using e-cigarettes



of nicotine addiction starts
before the user is 18

FY26 IMPACT



- **401 youth trained**
- **2,804+ youth volunteer hours**
- **22 State legislators met with in one Day at the Capitol**

“

Evolverment helped me find my voice in a time I was scared to speak up. I built connections with people that turned into lifetime friendships. I was able to be a part of a movement that aimed to prosper lives. Evolverment made my young adulthood into such a memorable time.... I thank you all for everything the organization has done for me, and for helping me blossom - and find courage within myself... I hope Evolverment is able to enrich countless other lives as it did mine.

-ENMLT, Rio Rancho

”

HOW IT WORKS



HOW WE DO THIS WORK



Educate Community



Raise Awareness



Capture Evidence

**POLICY
CHANGE**

OUR FOCUSED EFFORTS IN EVOLVEMENT



**WE FOCUS ON EDUCATING
AND WORK TOWARDS POLICY CHANGE**

24/7 CAMPAIGN

Since 2015, the 24/7 campaign has been helping schools in New Mexico adopt, implement and enforce comprehensive nicotine-free policies.

In 2023, 24/7 worked with state legislators and the NM PED to adopt Rule 6.12.4 which updates the state school nicotine policy requirements to be 100% comprehensive.

Leading up to the policy victory Evolver youth advocates and Rescue staff conducted over 200 school board meetings leading to 17 school districts voluntarily updating their policy.

Although the rule is a statewide requirement, many school districts are unaware of the rule and still need to update their policy.



2023 Statewide Rule

Requirement of 100% nicotine-free policies



Main updates in requirements:

- ★ Covers **all** commercial nicotine & tobacco products
- ★ Applies to **everyone** on school property or school events.
- ★ Progressive and supportive disciplinary action.
 - Requires referrals and resources to help overcome addiction.
- ★ Nicotine-Free Signage is required



24/7 Ad Campaign

Statewide reach to:

- Principals, teachers, administrators, and school staff

Support for schools including:

- Sample policy language, bilingual signage, implementation tools, and resources for parents and guardians.

FY26 IMPACT



"Having young people involved and advocating for their health and well-being is impactful. Students hearing about the effects of tobacco and nicotine from other students will increase the likelihood of the message being heard"

- Raton, HS
Principal

15 events | 18 school board meetings | 11 principal meetings | 1,725 support messages

~20,000 additional students reached by nicotine-free signage



NO MINOR SALE

An educational and advocacy campaign with a goal to:
reduce the sale of nicotine products to minors.





FY26 IMPACT



32 events | 15 cities | 13 counties | 10,000+ exposures | 4,000+ messages of support since 2025 | 44 policymaker meetings



NO MINOR SALE

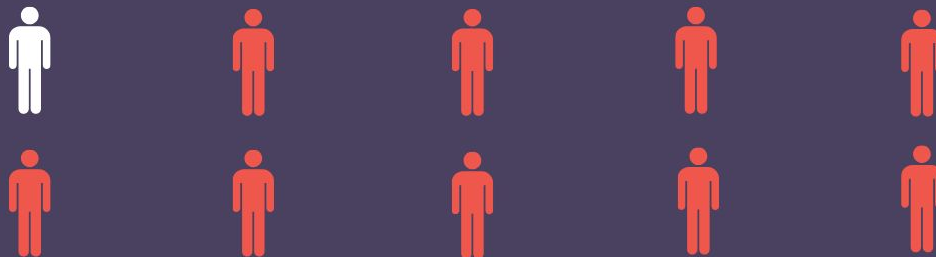
NUPAC
Nicotine Use Prevention and Control



The Issue: Predatory Marketing and Flavors

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in New Mexico. Flavored nicotine products continue to attract and addict youth in our communities.

According to the 2025 National Youth Tobacco Survey, **more than 9 in 10 youth who vape use flavors.** Popular flavors include fruit, candy, desserts, other sweets, mint, and menthol.



9 out of 10

Youth who vape
use flavors.



HEALTH EQUITY AND MENTHOL



- 81% of Black adults who smoke use menthol cigarettes. (CDC).
- 36% of LGBTQ+ people who smoke use menthol cigarettes, compared with 29% of straight people who smoke. (CDC).
- 40% of middle and high school students who currently smoke use menthol cigarettes. (CDC).



When nicotine
flavors are restricted,
teen vaping
plummets



FLAVOR RESTRICTION WORKS

Youth Vaping Prevalence in California

- 6.2% – Communities with Flavor Restriction
- 7.7% – Communities without Flavor Restriction

Results

- Decrease in Youth Vaping
- No Increase in Cigarette Smoking
- Improved Rates Over Time



Looking Ahead: Nicotine Flavor Restriction

NICOTINE FLAVOR RESTRICTION

- We can support healthier youth this legislative session
- 4,000+ messages of support collected
 - 87% of New Mexican respondents agree or strongly agree that nicotine flavor restriction should be adopted in New Mexico
- Opportunities for youth involvement





Youth nicotine prevention program that provides engaging presentations for elementary and middle school students.



**Preparing students
for a vape-free future**
is easier with help

Own Your Air Digital Ad Campaign

- 1 million impressions
- 12,000 engagements
- 115 educator and administrator sign-ups
- Built awareness and interest in bringing Own Your Air to New Mexico schools

FY26 IMPACT



753 youth ages 7 to 14 received prevention education

Looking Ahead: Sustainable Funding

- **Can strengthen and grow the Evolvement program**
- **Increase overall footprint including**
 - Elementary and middle school prevention efforts
 - Policy efforts
 - Media efforts
- **Explore new areas and demographics**
 - Digital sales and safety
 - Holistic school partnerships
 - Rural and AI/AN populations



Abstract geometric shapes in the corners: top-left has black lines forming a right angle with an arrow; top-right has blue and yellow lines forming a right angle; bottom-left has yellow overlapping triangles; bottom-right has a yellow rectangle.

THANK YOU!