truth initiative
freedom from nicotine addiction

900 G Street, NW
Fourth Floor
Washington, DC 20001

truthinitiative.org
202 454 5555

Truth Initiative Highlights Free Youth Prevention Curricula for Red Ribbon Week 2026

Free digital curricula help educators address nicotine, cannabis and prescription drug misuse while connecting students who use nicotine directly to proven quit support

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 26, 2026) – As Red Ribbon Week 2026 kicks off, Truth Initiative is spotlighting *Vaping: Know the truth* and *Prescription Drug Safety: Know the truth*, two free curricula that educators can use to help students navigate today's evolving addiction landscape, including e-cigarettes, oral nicotine pouches, cigarettes, cannabis and prescription drug misuse**.** Observed annually Oct. 23–31, Red Ribbon Week is a national drug use prevention awareness campaign that offers a timely opportunity for schools to educate students about substance use risks and connect them with support.

First launched in 2020, *Vaping: Know the truth* was recently updated for the new school year to reflect changing patterns of youth nicotine use, with lessons addressing e-cigarettes, oral nicotine pouches and cigarettes. The course also covers cannabis use and the overlapping risks of nicotine and cannabis co-use. Designed for middle and high school students, the curriculum features new lessons, videos, and a refreshed design, using a youth-centered, peer-to-peer voice and self-guided digital format. The lessons also explore why young people use these substances, their negative side effects, and how to quit.

"Red Ribbon Week is an opportunity to give educators practical tools to help students understand the addiction risks they face and make informed choices," said Amy Taylor, Chief Development and Partnerships Officer at Truth Initiative. "These free curricula help schools start meaningful conversations about substance use, build students' confidence to refuse it, and connect those who need help with support."

Young people today are encountering a wide range of nicotine products, from flavored disposable e-cigarettes to oral nicotine pouches and cigarettes, and many use more than one. Truth Initiative research found that more than 45% of youth and nearly 53% of young adults who report past-month e-cigarette use also report using at least one additional tobacco product. Moreover, cannabis and tobacco are two of the most commonly used substances among U.S. youth. These patterns underscore that addiction risks rarely occur in isolation, highlighting the importance of prevention education that addresses nicotine, cannabis and co-use together.

Building on these themes, *Prescription Drug Safety: Know the truth* educates students about prescription drug misuse, actions they can take, and resources they can use to help peers struggling with substance use. The curriculum also addresses the dangers of counterfeit pills containing fentanyl, helping students recognize risks and understand how to support others in situations involving misuse and overdose.

Education plays an important role in preventing substance use and supporting students who want to quit. Traditional disciplinary actions such as suspension can disrupt educational journeys. These curricula provide accessible, evidence-based prevention educational tools that are designed to be positive learning resources and offer an alternative to punishment.

Importantly, *Vaping: Know the truth* goes beyond prevention education by seamlessly connecting students who already use nicotine with EX Program, a free, evidence-based digital quit program developed by Truth Initiative. Through the curriculum, students can directly enroll in EX Program, providing a clear pathway from education to action. Research has shown that young people who received EX Program text messages had 40% greater odds of quitting vaping compared to those who did not receive the intervention. EX Program also offers personalized quit plans and an online community to support people in quitting nicotine products, including e-cigarettes, cigarettes and oral nicotine pouches. Additional research has demonstrated its effectiveness in helping young people who use both nicotine and cannabis quit.

More than 1.8 million students have been active on *Vaping: Know the truth* since its launch in 2020. Those who completed the course saw a 15% average increase in e-cigarette knowledge scores compared to before completing the course, according to a study of more than 100,000 middle and high school students. *Prescription Drug Safety: Know the truth* has been shown to have a lasting impact on behavioral intent and attitudes as it relates to prescription drug misuse across all genders, races, and other demographic characteristics. More than 650,000 students have been reached by the course.

Both curricula are made available to schools at no cost through Everfi®, a leading provider of personal finance and essential life-skills education, and include self-guided digital learning experiences that help students understand the risks of nicotine and cannabis use and prescription drug misuse.

Learn more about resources available for teachers and students at truthinitiative.org/educators. While the courses are free, Truth Initiative also works

with partners to sustain and grow course usage in their footprint. To learn more, contact partnerships@truthinitiative.org.

About Truth Initiative

Truth Initiative® is a national nonprofit public health organization committed to a future free from lifelong addiction, fostering healthier lives and a more resilient nation. Our mission is to prevent youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empower quitting for all. Through our evidence-based, market-leading cessation intervention, EX® Program, and national public education campaigns, we lead the fight against youth and young adult tobacco use. Learn more at truthinitiative.org.

###