

TRU Storm Toolkit

Help create awareness about the dangers of tobacco products (like e-cigarettes) and expose the lies of Big Tobacco by getting involved in tobacco-free activities and events like TRU Storms!

What is a TRU Storm?

TRU Storms celebrate a tobacco-free lifestyle with the purpose of educating others about the importance of being tobacco-free. TRU Storms are events that are hosted by TRU Groups across the state of Pennsylvania. While these events can take place any time of the year, they are typically held around **tobacco-free holidays**. These “storms” can take place at schools or other organizations where TRU Groups may be located, such as YMCAs, YWCAs, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, LGBTQ+ organizations, and more. TRU Advisors can organize the storms or TRU Youth can plan them too!

What are Tobacco-Free Holidays?

Tobacco-Free Holidays are opportunities for people to educate others about tobacco products like cigarettes, e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and more, through **tobacco-free activities** or **TRU Storms**. These calendar annual events are opportunities to support and encourage others to quit tobacco and provide them with the resources that they need. Many activities can be done during these holidays to help promote being tobacco-free. These holidays include:

- 1) The Great American Smoke out in November
- 2) The Great American Spit out in February
- 3) Threw with Chew Week in February
- 4) Kick Butts Day in March
- 5) World No Tobacco Day in May
- 6) World Lung Cancer Day in August

The options don't just end there. TRU Storms can also take place during other events such as Earth Day in April and Red Ribbon Week in October. For instance, [Point of Sale](#) initiatives can also be considered a TRU Storm, so these tobacco-free events don't necessarily have to fall on a specific tobacco-free holiday. The opportunities are endless!

TRU Swag

Don't forget to check out the TRU Gear that's available to students who participate in TRU Storms! View the items that are available and request gear [here](#).

What are Tobacco-Free Activities?

Tobacco-free activities can be done as part of a TRU Storm and can include different ways to create involvement amongst your TRU Group to promote healthy, tobacco-free lifestyles by educating others about the dangers and health effects of tobacco products as well as providing quitting resources. See below for activity/event ideas to help recruit other students and promote tobacco-free education. ****Due to COVID-19, please note that these activity ideas are subject to change. Comments are notated next to the activities that can be made virtual. Please refer to the PA Department of Health or the CDC for further guidance on social distancing rules in your area.***

- 1) **Cigarette Butt/JUUL Pod Clean-Up:** Notice a lot of cigarette butts or empty JUUL pods in your community? Chemicals found in both combustible tobacco products like cigarettes and non-combustible tobacco products like e-cigarettes can be dangerous to the environment. According to Truth Initiative, over four *trillion* cigarettes are littered each year and account for almost 40% of all collected litter.

Organize your TRU Members to change that statistic and pick up the littered products from your school, organization, or community*. Educate others about this issue by displaying the number of cigarette butts/JUUL pods found; post signs about the environmental dangers from this litter.

**use protective gear like gloves when picking up these products.*



Photo courtesy of Tobacco Free NWPA

- 2) **Tobacco-Free Movie Nights:** According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the Surgeon General’s report found that smoking in movies causes young people to start smoking. Giving an “R” rating to future movies with smoking occurrences could help reduce the number of smokers by nearly 1 in 5. Host a tobacco-free movie night with your TRU Group to show that smoking doesn’t have to be included in movies and follow-up the movie with a discussion on the dangers of smoking in movies and how you can help to decrease that.

**Virtual Option: This is something that can be done virtually or from the safety of your own home as well with group discussion over an online platform such as Zoom.*

- 3) **Tobacco-Free Pledge:** Make the pledge to go tobacco-free and have students sign-up to be tobacco-free, too. The tobacco-free pledge can be held at a variety of school functions such as sporting events, concerts, orientation, club meetings, activity fairs, and much more!

**Virtual Option: Signatures can be collected virtually for a tobacco-free pledge and can be shared via social media.*



Photo courtesy of Titusville YWCA

- 4) **Taking Down Tobacco:** Help TRU Youth get educated in the dangers and health effects of tobacco products and work to expose the lies of the tobacco industry through [Taking Down Tobacco](#), offered by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids! This is a free, one-hour online training that can also help teens become tobacco-free leaders in their schools and communities.

**Virtual Option: This is an online training that can be done from the safety of everyone's homes!*



Photo courtesy of schools from Freeland, Clarks Summit, and Laporte, PA

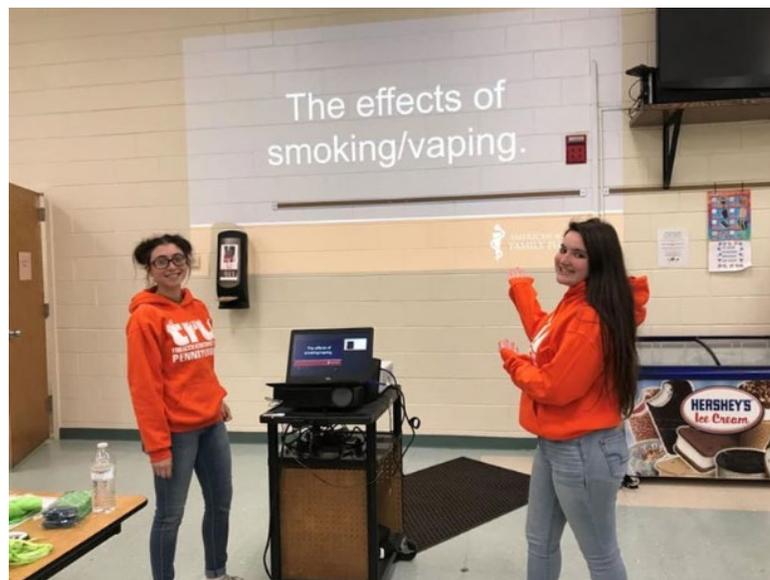


Photo courtesy of Western Wayne.

- 5) **Tobacco-Free Poster Contest:** Work with TRU Members to design “no smoking,” “no vaping,” or “tobacco-free” signs for the students to post around your school or organization, or to bring to another event such as a sports game. These signs/posters can be created for windows, doors, classrooms, bulletin boards, in outdoor areas, the cafeteria, etc. Make it interesting by turning this sign-creation into a poster challenge contest and vote on which entry is the most creative or most impactful and reward the student with the winning poster design.

**Virtual Option: Design a poster using materials found at home and share photos on social media tagging TRU @TRUinPA!*



Photo courtesy of schools from Freeland, Clarks Summit, and Laporte, PA

- 6) **Blow Bubbles, Not Smoke:** To creatively spread awareness about the dangers of “blowing smoke” or “blowing aerosol” – blow bubbles instead! Get a large group of TRU Youth together to all blow bubbles at the same time or even blow bubbles using chewing gum. Take pictures and post on social media using the hashtag, #BlowBubblesNotSmoke to start a social media storm! Watch this [video](#) as an example, courtesy of Mahanoy Area School District.

**Virtual Option: Large groups are not suggested at this time. Blow bubbles at home with family or on your own and upload the video to social media tagging TRU @TRUinPA.*

- 7) **Legislator Letter Writing Party:** With your group, start a letter writing party to state legislators about tobacco control issues that matter to the students, such as funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs ([MSA Funding](#)), or even the problems you see in your own experience with [e-cigarettes](#). Help TRU Youth raise their voices to make a difference! Find your legislators [here](#).

****Virtual Option: Postcards to download and e-mail or mail lawmakers thanking them for their support of tobacco prevention funding for programs like TRU can be found at TRUinPA.org under "Take Action". You can even write your postcards or letters together virtually via Zoom.***



Photo courtesy of Western Wayne.

- 8) **Advocate:** Make a difference in your community and schedule a legislative visit with your state senator or representative, or with the state senator or representative who works in your district and attend with a group of fellow TRU Students. Educate them on the dangers of tobacco products and express the importance of tobacco control issues like securing lifesaving funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs ([MSA Funding](#)). Find your legislator [here](#) and share the story of your visit [here](#)! Register to be an official Advocate with the Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco [here](#) if you haven't already, and sign up for Tobacco Resistance Unit updates [here](#).

****Virtual Option: Legislative visits can be completed as phone calls or e-mails to your state representative or senator as well!***



Photo courtesy of Tobacco Free NWPA.

- 9) **Social Media Savvy:** With your members, create a video highlighting the dangers of using tobacco products and why it's so important NOT to use them, (such as protecting others from secondhand aerosol or smoke). Or, develop a video sharing the importance of Tobacco 21. Get creative! Share this video on social media tagging @TRUinPA and use a hashtag to create a social media storm.
- 10) **Talk with Chalk:** Make your students' voices heard by having them write out the information about the dangers of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) by designing their own creative messages with chalk on sidewalks, etc. (with the permission of their school or organization, of course!)

****Virtual Option: Take photos of your chalk messages at home and share them with friends and family or post them on social media tagging TRU @TRUinPA.***



Photo courtesy of Drug Free Aliquippa.

11) Photovoice Advocacy: Have you seen anything on or around your organization, or even on the outskirts of your community that seems alarming? For instance, have you seen a lot of tobacco ads targeted towards youth and young adults? Have you noticed a lot of littered tobacco products in parks or on sidewalks or outside of dorms on your campus? Work with a group of your TRU Members and take photos of what you notice. Get together to form discussion groups, such as part of a class project, and talk about what the problem is in the photo and what the solution could be. Learn more about [Photovoice Advocacy](#).

Help us lead the way to a tobacco-free future!

Check out more virtual activity ideas in our "Quarantivities" Toolkit found on [TRUinPA.org](https://truinpa.org) under "Take Action" and "TRU Storms!"



Resources:

PACTOnline.org

TRUinPA.org

Lung.org

TakingDownTobacco.org

CDC.gov

Photovoice.org

TruthInitiative.org