AGGRESSIVE ANTI-VAPING CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY IN PATERNSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

With vaping-related illnesses on the rise, district takes action to promote the facts about vaping with “Escape The Vape” campaign

PATERSON – District officials reported on the progress of the aggressive anti-vaping initiatives that are underway in the district, including a new “Escape The Vape” campaign, to the Board of Education commissioners on Wednesday.

“We are taking aim against the misinformation and health hazards surrounding vaping. Vaping is more dangerous than smoking cigarettes, but too many people believe the opposite is true,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. “We are going to make sure that our students and families know the facts and give them all the support we can to help everyone in Paterson Public Schools ‘Escape the Vape.’”

Laurel Olson, the district’s supervisor of student assistance programs, presented the campaign to Board of Education commissioners at their workshop meeting on Wednesday evening. The components of the campaign include a page on the district’s website with vaping facts and information resources, and an art contest calling for student-created posters (by elementary students) and videos (by high school students) that are based on the campaign’s “Escape The Vape” theme.

These are the latest phases of the campaign that began in July with the review of substance abuse referral data, which showed a high number of vaping related incidents. A district anti-vaping committee was soon established, which is comprised of district administrators, members of the clergy, as well as members of the following organizations:

- The City of Paterson
- Paterson Police Department
- Passaic County Sheriff’s Department
- Paterson Municipal Alliance
- Paterson Coalition Against Substance Abuse (P-CASA)
- Paterson Education Fund

The anti-vaping committee is working to incorporate the use of Aspire Counseling Services for students with multiple vape possession offenses. Future goals of the committee also include pursuing grant opportunities, booking anti-vaping speakers, holding assembly programs, establishing student-led anti-vaping teams, and revising the district’s health curriculum by the next school year to include education about vaping.
A series of educational presentations was launched in October about the dangers of vaping. To date, presentations have been given to students, parents, school staff, religious leaders, instructional and personal assistants, and principals. Presentations have been scheduled for central office staff and supervisors.

In the months that the district’s anti-vaping initiatives have been moving forward, the national crisis caused by vaping has gotten worse. In August, there had been one reported vaping-related death in the country and 193 reported vaping-related illnesses. As of December 4, those national statistics rose to 48 reported vaping-related deaths and 2,291 reported vaping-related illnesses.

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