

# Restorative Justice



## The Problem

Many youth face criminal charges, fines, and suspensions for vape-related offenses. Instead of receiving support and treatment, they are punished—despite evidence showing that therapy and counseling are the most effective ways to help young people quit.

## A Proven Solution

### The Harrisburg YMCA Model

- Schools, District Courts & YMCA Tobacco Prevention Programs partnered to create an alternative response to youth vape offenses.
- Instead of suspensions or fines, youth were referred to prevention programs focused on treatment, education, and support.
- Results (2023-24 School Year):
  - » 51 youth referred from 8 school districts & 15 schools (Dauphin, Cumberland, Perry Co.)
  - » 23 youth successfully quit after 4 sessions
  - » 34 youth still working toward quitting
  - » Courts & schools waived fines and penalties for youth who completed the program

This restorative justice approach is working—and it needs to expand.

## Our Comprehensive Approach

### Intervention & Rehab

Youth should be offered treatment, not punished

### Education Programs

Prevention and awareness to stop vaping before it starts

- **CATCH My Breath**  
A 4-session, evidence-based prevention program
- **Tobacco Resistance Unit (TRU)**  
Youth-led advocacy for ages 12-18

### Court & School Partnerships

Work with magisterial and juvenile courts, judges, and probation officers to ensure referrals to treatment, not punishment

### Community Service

Increase service hours per offense as a nonpunitive consequence

## Why Restorative Justice Works

### Addresses addiction

Focuses on treatment and education instead of punishment

### Reduces repeat offenses

Youth learn healthier coping strategies

### Keeps kids in school

Prevents suspensions and missed education

### Strengthens communities

Families, schools and peers work together to support youth

## Our Call to Action



### Expand this model across Pennsylvania

We need more courts and schools to prioritize treatment over punishment.

### Join ATVFC

Become a member of the Advocates for Tobacco and Vape-Free Communities

Host a TRU or CATCH My Breath Program

Refer youth who want to quit to [MyLifeMyQuit.org](https://www.mylifemyquit.org)

Refer adults who want to quit to 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Questions? Reach out today! [npolanco@latinoconnection.org](mailto:npolanco@latinoconnection.org)