

APRIL 26-28, 2026

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Vaping in the Workplace: From Evidence to Action in Occupational Health Policy

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Objectives:

1. Summarize findings from the Quinn et al. (2024) study on OHN knowledge, attitudes, and barriers related to vaping policies.
2. Identify current gaps in workplace policies related to e-cigarette use and their implications for occupational health.
3. Develop action-oriented strategies for policy development and workforce education, aligned with evidence and regulatory guidance.
4. Apply leadership and change frameworks to advance organizational support for smoke- and vape-free workplace initiatives.

Quinn et al. (2024) E-Cigarette and Vaping Perspectives: Recommendations for OHN's Background

- Background: Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control indicate that the use of e-cigarettes, vaping, and other electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) are increasing but research is still needed on the long-term health consequences that the products have on workers or on workers that have secondhand exposure. While most employers ban smoking in the workplace, tobacco-free policies do not always extend specifically to e-cigarette products. In 2023, only 37 states and the District of Columbia prohibit smoking in the workplace, but most of these states do not include vaping in the non-smoking ruling.

Design and Sample

- Exploratory, cross-sectional survey of OHNs (AAOHN members) sent via email to 3248 OHPs who were members of the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN).
- Investigated OHNs:
 - Knowledge of e-cigarettes, vaping and ENDS
 - Workplace policy inclusion of e-cigarettes, vaping and ENDS
 - Attitudes toward change, resistance, organizational readiness, and leadership commitment influencing the ability to create change in tobacco-free workplace policies.
- Survey was a 91-item electronic survey, with 299 returns and 230 completed responses.

Key Findings

- Advanced education associated with higher “attitude toward change” ($p = .043$)
- Fewer years in practice associated with lower transformational leadership scores ($p = .039$)
- ~90% perceived organizational leaders as interested in safety changes
- Capacity for change exists but needs activation

Key Findings:

Policy inclusion gap (the ENDS blind spot)

- Policy exists—but often doesn't explicitly include vaping
- ~40% reported they did not have—or were unsure they had—a tobacco-free program that includes e-cigarettes
- Implication: “smoke-free” ≠ automatically “vape-free” without explicit language
- Inconsistent enforcement + exposure risk

Why this matters?

- E-cigarettes/ENDS use are a workplace health & policy issue
 - ENDS use continues across working-age adults
 - Exposure and use create workplace air quality, safety, and culture concerns (secondhand exposure risks)
 - Many smoke-free policies were written before ENDS existed and create policy ambiguity and inconsistent enforcement
- OHNs are positioned to lead education + policy + cessation support + change management but face some barriers

Barriers Highlighted by the Study (what gets in the way)

- Common implementation challenges
- Education needs persist (knowledge + regulatory clarity)
- Policy success requires both management and employee support
- Practical constraints: time, staffing, competing priorities

Updated Stats on Adult Vaping

7.0% of U.S. adults reported current e-cigarette use in 2024

Trend Over Time

2019: 4.5%

2020: 3.7%

2022: 6.0%

2023: 6.5%

2024: **7.0%**

- Highest vaping use in working-age adults (21–34)
- Vaping use is increasing while combustible smoking declines
- Workplace policies may not explicitly include vaping (delivery method) or delineate specific substances (i.e., THC, flavorings)

Workplace Policy Implementation and Gaps

- State & Local Policy Landscape
 - 28 states/territories include vaping in 100% smoke-free laws (up from ~8 in 2017).
 - 1,000+ local jurisdictions include vaping restrictions
- Many workplaces operate in multi-state environments and mixed regulatory environments



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Panel Discussion

Knowledge

Study Anchor:

- Knowledge gaps persist around FDA regulation and scope
- Education and regulatory clarity were needed
- Many OHNs understood the health risks but lack policy clarity

Panel Questions:

Attitude Toward Change

Study Anchor:

- Advanced education correlated with more positive attitudes toward change.
- Most respondents perceived leadership as interested in safety improvements.

Panel Questions:

Resistance To Change

Study Anchor:

- Resistance scores varied
- Barriers included employee interest, management commitment, and staffing.

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Panel Questions:



Organizational Readiness for Change

Study Anchor:

- Organizational readiness was not universally strong.
- Perceived leadership support varied by environment.
- Knowledge gaps persist around FDA regulation and scope

Panel Questions:

Leadership Commitment to Safety

Study Anchor:

- ~90% perceived leadership interest in safety changes.
- Leadership commitment influenced policy success.

Panel Questions:

Transformational Leadership

Study Anchor:

- Transformational leadership scores increased with years of experience.
- Experienced OHNs more comfortable leading change.

Panel Questions:

Study-to-practice

- Bridging the Research Gap
- Industry-Specific Lessons Learned
- Panel Questions:



Lessons Learned



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Questions

