



Dear Parents, Students, and all Members of our Judge Community,

On this snowy morning, I wanted to take a short moment to acknowledge a growing concern that you may have seen on national news outlets, and on various online platforms regarding an emerging nicotine product. This form of nicotine consumption, most prevalently found in the “Zyn” brand first emerged in 2017 as a smokeless alternative to vaping.¹ I have concerns that some of our students may be using these products. This product allows for a high level of nicotine consumption, and can be purchased both online and from some convenience stores that are not judicious at checking the age of consumers.

At Judge Memorial, we hold steadfast to our mission of growing builders of a more just society. Part of fulfilling this mission involves fostering open and honest conversations about the dangers and consequences associated with substance abuse and its inherent risks with young bodies. It is our duty as educators and caregivers to equip our young people with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed, healthy choices that will positively shape their futures.

As partners in your child's education and well-being, we are committed to addressing these issues head-on. Our approach involves ongoing education, prevention initiatives, and support services tailored to meet the needs of our students:

Education: We will continue to integrate age-appropriate substance abuse education into our overall school culture, providing accurate information about the risks and consequences associated with using products like Zyn, nicotine in traditional forms, and other illicit substances. Through advisory discussions, and future informational materials, we aim to empower students with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions.

1

<https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/as-nicotine-pouches-get-more-popular-some-researchers-have-concerns/2961195/>

Prevention Programs: We have implemented a prevention program here at Judge designed to raise awareness, promote healthy behaviors, and counteract the influence of peer pressure and media messaging on illicit substance abuse. Most prominently, our random substance abuse screening program that occurs monthly aims to help students make healthier choices. We hope this offers students an appropriate disincentive to ever embark on using illicit substances. Additionally, we encourage students to develop their own prayers and or mindfulness practice as a way of dealing with their stressors. Through daily prayer and mindfulness, we hope that we are encouraging students to utilize healthy coping mechanisms rather than turning to illicit ones.

Counseling and Support: We maintain a supportive and responsive counseling office, where students can seek guidance, resources, and assistance related to substance use issues. Our counselors are available to provide individualized support, intervention, and referrals to external agencies as needed. Students may also utilize SafeUT as an outside resource if they have questions and or concerns regarding the use of illicit substances.

Parental Involvement: We recognize the vital role that parents and guardians play in shaping their children's attitudes and behaviors towards substance use. We encourage open communication, active engagement, and partnership between home and school to reinforce consistent messaging. I hope that this note sparks a conversation at home that ensures that our students know that we have their health and well-being at the forefront of our mind when we discuss the dangers of substance abuse.

As we embark on this journey together, we invite your collaboration and support in our efforts to safeguard the health and well-being of our students. By working collectively, we can create a nurturing environment where our young people can thrive, free from the harms of substance abuse.

In closing, Judge is committed to educating your child academically, socially, spiritually, and physically. In working together, I am hopeful that we can ensure a safe and substance free environment for our Bulldogs.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.

Matt Douglas
Dean of Students