



STUDENTS WORKING AGAINST TOBACCO

Unwrap the Truth Activity Guide

The 2014-15 SWAT Youth Advocacy Board have contributed their ideas to create an activity guide focused on highlighting the tobacco industry's use of menthol as an additive to attract new smokers, especially youth.



Unwrap the Truth

Share the Facts about Menthol

Activity Guide

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
 - a. Background Information
 - b. The Facts
 - c. Before You Begin
 - d. Find Out More

2. Messaging and Design
 - a. M.A.D. Skills Overview
 - b. Event Planning - The Basics - Do's & Don'ts
 - c. Media Tips and Tools
 - d. Using Social Media to Maximize Your Message
 - i. Facebook
 - ii. Tumblr
 - iii. Instagram
 - iv. Twitter

3. Hitting the Streets – School and Community Activities
 - a. M.A.D. Breakdown
 - b. BADvertising
 - c. Cafeteria Events
 - d. Other On-Campus Activities
 - e. Community Events and Mobilization
 - f. Communicating with Decision Makers
 - g. Walking Menthol Retail Survey



Introduction

Background Information

Tobacco companies add menthol to cigarettes for two reasons....menthol makes it easier to start smoking and harder to quit. Tobacco companies can extract menthol from peppermint plants or make it in a lab. Either way, the result is the same. By adding menthol to cigarettes, it reduces the harsh taste of tobacco and has a cooling effect on the mouth and throat. According to a 2013 report published by the Food and Drug Administration, mentholated cigarettes are more appealing to new smokers, more addictive to longtime smokers and pose a greater threat to the public's health than unflavored cigarettes.

The 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act's ban on the use of characterizing flavors in cigarettes did not include menthol, although the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does have the authority to implement a ban through regulations. There are currently no restrictions on characterizing flavors, including menthol, in other tobacco products such as little cigars, cigarillos, and smokeless tobacco.

A few facts to help you spread the word....

- Menthol flavoring contributes to addiction in youth smokers.¹
- Among cigarette smokers, menthol cigarette use was more common among 12-17 year olds (56.7 percent) and 18-25 years olds (45 percent) than among older age groups.²
- Nearly 84% of African American smokers and 30% of Latino smokers use mentholated cigarettes. Only 20% of white smokers choose mentholated cigarettes.³
- African American smokers are nearly 11 times more likely to use menthol than White smokers.⁴
- Women are 1.6 times more likely than men to smoke menthols.⁵

Before you Begin

Initial planning steps for all activities should include investing time researching menthol issue. Some of the best ideas are born when you can show just how outrageous the tobacco industry can be as they market their products to kids. But, you have to know the facts. So, research the products themselves. How many youth are using these products? What's different about the packaging? What are the tobacco industry's own words about these products. Then, watch your knowledge be the catalyst for some incredibly creative advocacy.

¹ Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee. Menthol Cigarettes and Public Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations. Rockville, MD: Center for Tobacco Products, Food and Drug Administration; 2011.

² Giovino GA, Villanti AC, Mowery PD, et al. Differential trends in cigarette smoking in the USA: is menthol slowing progress? *Tob Control*. Sep 27 2013.

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. *The NSDUH Report: Recent Trends in Menthol Cigarette Use*. Rockville, MD November 18

⁴ Lawrence D, Rose A, Fagan P, Moolchan ET, Gibson JT, Backinger CL. National patterns and correlates of mentholated cigarette use in the United States. *Addiction*. 2010;105:13-31.

⁵ Lawrence D, Rose A, Fagan P, Moolchan ET, Gibson JT, Backinger CL. National patterns and correlates of mentholated cigarette use in the United States. *Addiction*. 2010;105:13-31.



Find Out More

Here is a list of additional websites with fact sheets and reliable information about the flavored tobacco issue.

1. <http://www.swatflorida.com>
2. <http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/>
3. http://tobaccofreekids.org/en/resources/fact_sheets
4. <http://www.trinketsandtrash.org>
5. <http://www.legacyforhealth.org>
6. www.lung.org/stop-smoking/about-smoking/facts-figures/whats-in-a-cigarette.html
7. <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/>
8. <http://thefactsnow.tumblr.com/>

Messaging and Design

M.A.D. Skills

What are M.A.D. Skills? They are the three elements that make up any effective communications campaign. It isn't enough to know the facts; you have to know your message before you can deliver to the various groups of people in your community. Proper delivery requires M.A.D. Skills. Each activity should be developed with thoughtful consideration about the three key elements:

Message – What do you want people to know or understand about your campaign? In other words, what Message does SWAT need to emphasize to communicate how important it is to support this policy? Then, back up your message with facts.

Audience – Which specific people or group of people do you want to reach with your Message? What interest does this audience have in learning about menthol flavored tobacco? And, why do you need their support?

Delivery – What is the most impactful way to deliver your Message to your selected Audience? Sometimes, how you deliver a Message is as important as what you say. If you're asking the audience for something, think about what will motivate them to act.

Think hard about what message you want to get out there and which people you want to reach. Then think creatively about the most effective way to get that message across.

You can use your M.A.D. Skills to brainstorm and strategize the best types of activities to support anti-menthol activities. Take a few minutes, either as a SWAT club or as individual SWAT members, to develop your own menthol flavored tobacco advocacy plan. Then use this to guide planning discussions for all your events.



Event Planning

Successful events require planning. Once the audience has been identified and the message carefully crafted, it is time to plan the delivery. There are several factors to consider when planning an advocacy activity.

- What is the objective of the activity and what are the expected outcomes? Is there a call to action for participants?
- Who is your audience? How can you reach them?
- How much time do you have to plan the activity? You will need to set a date, time, location that will reach your targeted audience.
- What is your budget?
- What resources and items will you need? With enough creativity and time, many items can be donated or made. Do you have enough SWAT members to help with the event?
- How can media be used to extend the reach of your message?
- Does the event require any special permissions or permits?

Media Tips and Tools

National tobacco observances, like No Menthol Sunday and World No Tobacco Day, are an excellent opportunity to draw attention to your local tobacco issues. The media are often notified by national tobacco control organizations. Then they search for ways to highlight local action. What could be more newsworthy than the outreach you are doing in your school or community? The media can be useful in advertising your event, spreading your message and increasing the number of supporters. There are, however, a few tips that can increase the reach of your message with the media.

- Message, Message, Message: The first step is to ensure you have a clear message for your event. The message should be limited to two or three facts and a call to action. Each member of your SWAT club should know the key message and be able to talk with your audience about the message. Be sure to rehearse the key messages for your activity so you feel comfortable talking with the media, your peers and community members.
- Determine how the media will assist you: Do you need the media to attract participants to your event? Do you want the media to cover your event? Do you need the media to support your issue or print letters of support? Once you know how you want to use the media, it is easy to develop a list of contacts you should reach.
- Do your homework. Contacting media takes a little research. Ask questions like:
 - What are the steps we need to take to talk with the media?
 - Is there anyone (adult) who is responsible for making media requests on behalf of SWAT? Is there anyone whose permission we need to get before contacting the media?
 - What audience does my SWAT club intend to reach? Which types of media serve that audience?
 - How often is the newspaper, TV or radio show published?
 - Which TV and newspaper reporters cover community events? Which cover stories about schools? What are their deadlines?
 - What is the deadline for submitting press releases?
 - What is the cost to advertise?
 - How are letters to the editor or op-ed letters selected and submitted?



STUDENTS WORKING AGAINST TOBACCO

Using Social Media to Maximize your Message

Help spread the word about SWAT and how SWAT is working toward a tobacco free Florida. Join Tobacco Free Florida on social media and lend your voice to raise awareness about key tobacco issues like menthol.

On Facebook

Become a fan of Tobacco Free Florida. Visit www.facebook.com/tobaccofreeflorida and click "like." Tobacco Free Florida will be posting information about menthol periodically. When you see a post about menthol, select share and add your own comments so that your Facebook friends can view the information. The Tobacco Free Florida Facebook page is also an excellent place to promote your event or direct event participants for more chances to interact with our cause and spread the word. If you're creating your own posts about an event, include Tobacco Free Florida in your post using "@Tobacco Free Florida."

On Tumblr

Visit THE FACTS NOW at <http://thefactsnow.tumblr.com/> and share content with your social network of peers. You can make comments on the menthol modules and promote awareness.

On Instagram

Share photos during an event. A great way to generate excitement and drive traffic to your table. You can ask people attending to post pictures on their personal profiles as well.

On Twitter

On Twitter, a **trending** topic or popular Twitter **hashtag** is used to direct people to websites, help spread messages, and advance a conversation. By working together to tweet about a specific topic or common theme, you can generate awareness and hopefully encourage others to support your initiative.

Hashtag: Words or phrases that begin with the # symbol typed into Twitter connect people talking about certain topics. You can create your own hashtag for the events you plan. Be sure that SWAT members know the hashtag to use so that your event can be easily followed. You can also use the hashtag, **#nomentholmay**, for events with a menthol focus.

Trending: Topics that are "trending" on Twitter are topics that are immediately popular, rather than topics that have been popular for a while or on a daily basis. A word, phrase or topic that is tagged at a greater rate than other tags is considered a trending topic. Making a topic trend can be a concerted effort by users, but often happens naturally as people talk about the day's current events and headlines. For example, if **#nomentholmay** starts trending, then we will appear on the Twitter homepage of users in that specific location – in this case, the United States.

Follow Tobacco Free Florida on Twitter at [@tobaccofreefla](https://twitter.com/tobaccofreefla) and the THE FACTS NOW at [@thefactsnow](https://twitter.com/thefactsnow). Then, start tweeting and be sure to add the right hashtag to the end of your tweets. We encourage you to be creative and personalize your message. Keep in mind that you can only use 140 characters on Twitter and this includes the hashtag. Twitter does automatically shorten website URLs, so you are encouraged to include appropriate websites in your tweet.



Hitting the Streets

Now that you have selected your audience and crafted your message, it is time to deliver. This guide provides delivery ideas based upon your target audience. The activities are grouped according to the audience you are trying to reach; teens, parents and decision-makers. As you review the ideas, don't be afraid to enhance them by adding a new and creative twist that will make the idea a hit in your community or school. You will also notice some of the activities can be customized to target more than one audience.

M.A.D. Breakdown

		Youth	Parents	Decision Makers
MESSAGE		The tobacco industry uses menthol to target new users and replace the 1300 people who die each day in the United States from tobacco use.	You may not even know that menthol cigarettes are marketed to youth, but your kids do. Tobacco companies use menthol to influence youth to experiment with their products.	You can send a strong message and protect youth from the dangers of tobacco by proclaiming May 31 <i>No Menthol Sunday</i> . Your support will help create a healthier, safer environment for youth to live.
DELIVERY	BAD-vertising	✓		
	Cafeteria Events	✓		
	School Activities	✓		
	Community Event	✓	✓	
	Walking Menthol Retail Survey	✓	✓	✓
	No Menthol Sunday Proclamation		✓	✓
	Write a Letter to Decision Makers			✓

FINAL NOTE

Preparing for any event should include ensuring the SWAT members understand their role and what they should accomplish by conducting the event. Every SWAT member attending should be able to quickly answer the following questions if asked at any event:

1. Why are you here today?
2. What is your group hoping to accomplish?
3. What can I do to help?



BADvertising

BADvertising is the act of "doctoring-up" misleading tobacco ads, packaging or promotional items to create a more accurate portrayal of what tobacco sells (addiction, sickness and death). The act of BADvertising can be accomplished by:

- Physically cutting and pasting new images to the ads/packages;
- Manipulating the images on a computer screen, or;
- Correcting the images in your own mind every time you see a deceptive or misleading ad/package.

While many products and their advertisers are willfully misleading the public with deliberately deceptive advertising, no deception is currently more blatant than that of the tobacco industry---And nowhere are the consequences so deadly!

How to BADvertise:

Start by analyzing a tobacco ad, package or promotional item. Ask yourself questions like, what imagery are they using to market their product or what message are they using to appeal to their audience? Apply some facts about tobacco use to creatively re-design the image and message so that it portrays a true depiction of tobacco addiction. It helps to have scissors, glue, tape and old magazines on hand so that you can cut and paste new pictures and phrases on the old ad.

Here is an example of a Newport menthol cigarette ad that has been BADverted.

Original



BADverted



To help you conduct a simple version of the BADvertising activity, there is a template included in this toolkit with a menthol box on a blank sheet. Have participants write messages or facts on their sheet "Unwrapping the Truth" about menthol products and their deceptive marketing.



Host a Cafeteria Event at Your School

Activity Idea #1: Unwrap the Truth game show

Have students come up to your table to play a jeopardy style game that has been set up on the back wall behind the table. To create the game, place large photos of harmful ingredients found in tobacco (i.e. ammonia bottles, gas containers, acetone, arsenic, etc.) on the wall. Cover each photo with a large piece of green paper shaped like a mint leaf. Write numbers on each of the mint leaves. When a student is ready to play, have them pick a numbered leaf on the wall. Read a clue to what is behind the mint leaf and have the student try and guess what the ingredient is behind the leaf. Example: *One ingredient commonly found in menthol cigarettes is also commonly found in toilet bowl cleaner. What is that chemical?* The student can make a guess and then go and take their selected mint leaf off of the photo to reveal the correct answer- Ammonia. Let them sign their name on the back of the mint leaf if they got the answer correct. Display the winning mint leaves on a board nearby.

Activity Idea #2: Reach and teach on stage

Have a large box on stage. This box could look like a giant carton of menthol cigarettes or it could just be covered in mint leaves. Write a message on the box such as: *What secrets are the tobacco companies hiding behind their minty flavors?* Place items in the box that represent harmful chemicals found cigarettes. The items might include empty and clean bottles or containers or other items. (i.e. empty bottle of bathroom cleaner representing ammonia, empty bottle of nail polish remover representing acetone, a battery representing cadmium, a remote control car representing tar, etc.) Place inside the empty bottle, attach with string or tape a piece of green paper shaped like a mint leaf with a fact about the chemical written on it. Have youth reach in the box and pull out an item. Have them guess what the item represents. Then have them take out the mint fact and read the correct answer or related fact. (ie: *Did you know that acetone, an ingredient commonly found in fingernail polish remover is also found in cigarettes? Tobacco companies try to hide the harsh taste with minty flavorings. How "fresh" is that?*)

Activity Idea #3: Public forum for 'em

Stage a debate. Have SWAT members pose as Tobacco Executives and debate the facts with SWAT members related to menthol and its deceptive nature. Have each "Tobacco Executive" present an argument (possibly one the youth hear their peers make regularly around campus) and one at a time, allow a SWAT club member to rebut and rebuke the argument with fact based information. You can even use some of the tobacco industry's own words against them by incorporating quotes from industry [documents](#). Be sure to cite your references to preserve credibility. Use CDC, Tobacco Free Florida, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, American Lung Association and similar reputable organizations for your information.



Other ideas to conduct around a school campus

Activity #1: Wear Black Day

Encourage everyone to wear black on Friday, May 29 in honor of World No Tobacco Day and the 88 people who die every day in Florida of a tobacco-related illness. Use school announcements to promote the "Wear Black Day". Have a SWAT youth go on the televised school announcements on Friday wearing a green shirt or hoodie over their black shirt. Deliver the message by saying, *"You may be wondering why I am wearing a green shirt today. It's because tobacco companies add chemicals that taste like mint to menthol cigarettes so they can attract youth to their products. But, you can't hide the truth."* (Take off the green top layer.) *"Everyday 88 people die from a tobacco related illness. On May 31st we will not only celebrate World No Tobacco Day, but we will also be celebrating No Menthol Sunday. Take a stand and let your friends and family members know that it is time to unwrap the truth."*

Activity #2: Have a school wide contest to raise awareness and increase involvement. Contest might be a poster contest, video contest, door contest, meme contest etc. As one example, invite all homerooms to decorate their classroom door. A cool door idea might be to use ripped out print ads for menthol cigarettes to create a mosaic or classrooms could even be encouraged to BADvertise their door.

Activity #3: Use empty tissue boxes or other materials to create mock cartons of menthol cigarettes. Secretly place them around school, out in the open where people will see them. Place a piece of paper shaped like a mint leaf inside the box. On one side of the "leaf" place a fact about menthol cigarettes and smoking. On the other side write "Unwrap the Truth about Menthol"

Activity #4: Wrap actual or fake mint leaves with facts about menthol flavored tobacco and smoking and pass out at school. Use shocking data or even photos to get people's attention.

Activity #5: Ask a respected adult in the school (maybe a Principal, Coach or Counselor) to champion the message about the deceptiveness of menthol products. Ask them to help spread the word, possibly at a school event or during announcements.

Activity #6: Collect youth signatures pledging to avoid menthol tobacco on paper in the shape of a mint leaf. Use the "leaves" to create a bulletin board with a World No Tobacco Day / No Menthol Sunday message. Be sure the bulletin board's message is clear...*"Big Tobacco adds chemicals that taste like mint to menthol products in order to target youth."*



Ideas for Community Events and Mobilization

Activity #1: Mint Tree and Mock Menthol

At a community event, set-up a mock tree with mock mint leaves. On the leaves, write a question about menthol flavored cigarettes or smoking. Nearby set up something that looks like a giant pack of menthol cigarettes or a single menthol cigarette. This should be the same size as the mock tree. Write the answers to the questions on the pack/cigarette. Have people who come up to you pick a leaf with a question on it. Ask them to take it over to the mock pack/cigarette and find the corresponding answer. Have them place the leaf on top of the answer. The mock cigarette/pack will be covered up with mint leaves at the end of the event. Be sure to have a sign with a message that says something like *"Big Tobacco tries to cover up their lies with chemicals that taste like mint. It's time to Unwrap the Truth!"*

Activity #2: Start a No Menthol Miles club. Have runners log their miles until they get to 443,000 miles in remembrance of the 443,000 people who die every year as a result of tobacco use. You might even consider setting up a website for runners to log their miles.

Activity #3: SWAT youth visit a local grocery store or flea market over the weekend. Use the shopping carts to spread a message by taping a cool flier or 'zine that youth created to each cart so that people see it while they shop.

Activity #5: Recruit other youth organizations, youth groups and partners to be involved. Think about asking a Youth Pastor, Teacher or Coach to help spread the message at events outside of school.

Communicating With Decision Makers

Activity #1: Conduct a Walking Menthol Retail Survey. With the help of an adult advisor, plan several walking routes that have tobacco retailers near your school to survey. Using the survey tool, log the number and type of menthol advertisements on the outside of stores along your route. Write a letter to a decision maker such as a mayor, school board member, commissioner, or state representative sharing your findings. You could also submit your findings to a newspaper by writing an open editorial.

Activity #2: Meet with decision makers. Talk with them about No Menthol Sunday. Educate them on the impact it has on youth initiation. Ask them if they would be willing to read a proclamation in your community proclaiming May 31st as No Menthol Sunday.

Activity #3: Write a letter to the Tobacco Advisory Council describing your vision of a tobacco-free world. Share how your SWAT club is tackling the issue of menthol in honor of World No Tobacco Day and No Menthol Sunday.

Walking Menthol Retail Survey

As you walk your route, be on the lookout for store exteriors with visible tobacco advertisements. Convenience stores, gas stations, pharmacies, and tobacco stores are just a few examples of stores you may come across on your walk. For each store with visible tobacco advertisements fill out the information below as a group and take photographs of the advertisements you see.

Date: _____

Store Name: _____

Address: _____

Step 1: Type of Store (check one)

- ☐ Convenience ☐ Supermarket or Grocery ☐ Gas Station ☐ Tobacco
☐ Pharmacy ☐ Newsstand ☐ Beer, Wine, Liquor
☐ Other (Please Specify): _____

Step 2: Menthol Ad Placement and Discount Menthol Ads

- Are there ads for menthol cigarettes?.....☐ NO ☐ YES
- Are there menthol ads on store doors?.....☐ NO ☐ YES HOW MANY _____
- Are there ads on building walls?.....☐ NO ☐ YES HOW MANY _____
- Are there any "special" price ads?.....☐ NO ☐ YES HOW MANY _____
- Are there any ads with a multi-pack discount?.....☐ NO ☐ YES HOW MANY _____
- Are there ads on property fences?.....☐ NO ☐ YES HOW MANY _____
- Are there ads on functional items? e.g. windshield cleaning stations, trash cans, benches.
.....☐ NO ☐ YES HOW MANY _____
- Are there any ads in other places?.....☐ NO ☐ YES WHERE _____

Step 3: Can you see a school from this store?..... ☐ NO ☐ YES

If YES, estimate how far away it is:

- ☐ ½ block away
- ☐ 1 block away
- ☐ More than 1 block away

Step 4: Is there a place where youth might hang out nearby?..... ☐ NO ☐ YES

If YES, estimate how far away it is:

- ☐ ½ block away
- ☐ 1 block away
- ☐ More than 1 block away



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