



2018

ANNUAL REPORT

# National Media Campaign for the Prevention of Underage Drinking

*Talk. They Hear You.®*  
**Campaign Highlights**

June 2018

***SAMHSA***  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

## SAMHSA Acts To Prevent Underage Drinking

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) seeks to promote positive mental health and prevent substance misuse and health disorders. SAMHSA has long worked to reduce the impact of these issues on America's communities.

Nearly \$24.3 billion (about 10 percent) of the total \$249 billion economic cost of excessive alcohol consumption is related to underage drinking, much of due to premature mortality of underage youth.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol continues to be the most widely used substance among America's youth, with a higher proportion drinking alcohol than using tobacco, marijuana, or other drugs.<sup>2</sup> By age 20, almost one-third of young people report binge drinking at least once in the past month, and 10 percent report binge drinking five or more times in a month.<sup>3</sup>

Alcohol use is also associated with a greater likelihood of using other substances, including marijuana, tobacco, and other drugs.<sup>4</sup> Hospitalizations of 18- to 24-year-olds for overdoses involving a combination of opioids and alcohol tripled between 1998 and 2014.<sup>5</sup>

In response, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)—through the Sober Truth on Underage Drinking Act (STOP Act)—created the Underage Drinking Prevention National Media Campaign.

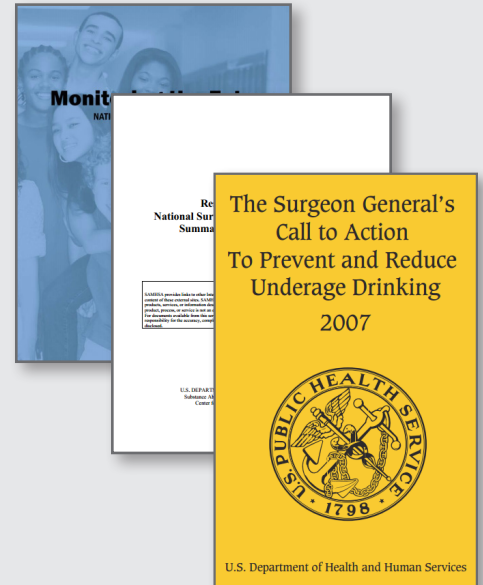
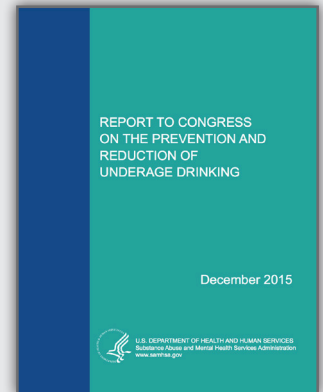
The Campaign, *Talk. They Hear You.*<sup>®</sup>, aims to:

1. Increase parent *awareness of the prevalence and risk* of underage drinking;
2. Equip parents with the *knowledge, skills, and confidence* to prevent underage drinking; and
3. Increase parent *actions to prevent underage drinking*.

*Talk. They Hear You.*<sup>®</sup>, engages parents and caregivers in preventing underage drinking. Historically the Campaign has focused on reaching parents and caregivers of children ages 9 to 15 for early intervention. In 2018 the Campaign started expanding to create resources for parents and caregivers of children under the age of 21.

The *Talk. They Hear You.*<sup>®</sup> Campaign is congressionally mandated and is evaluated, and reported annually in the *Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking*.

*Note: The background activities in the Preface describe efforts conducted in the 2013 and 2014 fiscal years.*



## What the Research Suggests

Alcohol continues to be the most widely misused substance among our nation's young people. SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that a higher percentage of youth (22.8 percent) ages 12 to 20 used alcohol in the past month than used tobacco (7 percent) or illicit drugs (9.4 percent).<sup>3</sup> Underage alcohol consumption increased with age in a steady progression from 1.2 percent for 12-year-olds to 53.3 percent for 20-year-olds.<sup>6</sup>

Parents have a significant influence on young people's decisions about alcohol consumption.<sup>7</sup> When parents know about underage alcohol use, they can protect their children from many of the high-risk behaviors associated with it. Further, parents who do not discourage underage drinking may have an indirect influence on young people's alcohol use.<sup>8</sup>

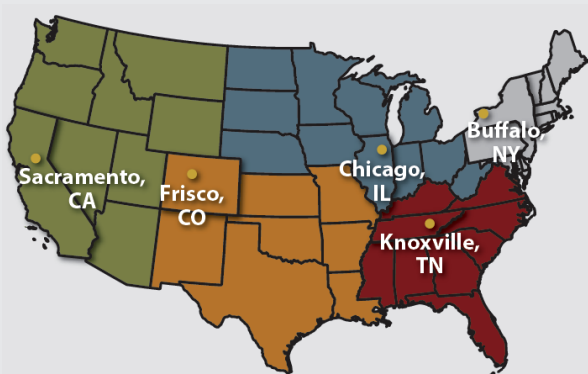
SAMHSA's *Talk. They Hear You.*<sup>®</sup> Campaign addresses these issues by drawing from social marketing and health education behavior theories, and from the latest scientific research and feedback from audiences across the country.

## Piloting *Talk. They Hear You.*<sup>®</sup> Across the National Prevention Network (NPN) Regions

In early to mid-2012, SAMHSA developed a national pilot program to test and refine Campaign creative materials and pretest the Campaign's national objectives in communities across the country. Five pilot sites implemented and evaluated the Campaign. The feedback received from market testing was incorporated into the final materials prior to launch.

### Pilot sites were asked to:

- Use Campaign messages and materials in current underage drinking awareness and education activities;
- Host at least one underage drinking awareness event;
- Include underage drinking research in existing educational materials;
- Provide overall feedback on the public service announcements (PSAs); and
- Gauge attitudes, behaviors, and concerns about underage drinking.



**The National Prevention Network's Five Regions**

### Selected pilot sites:

- People Reaching Out (Western NPN Region)
- Metropolitan Drug Commission (Southeast NPN Region)
- Asian Health Coalition (Central NPN Region)
- Summit Prevention Alliance (Southwest NPN Region)
- Erie County Council (Northeast NPN Region)

# Pilot-Testing Campaign Effectiveness Before Launch

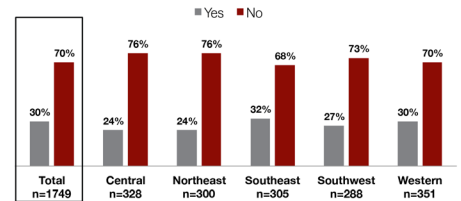
In addition to the pilot sites, SAMHSA administered a national Web survey to establish baseline attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors linked to underage drinking. Through “control” and “stimulus” groups, SAMHSA assessed longitudinal changes in underage drinking prevention behaviors and attitudes over a 3-month period. A small sample provided qualitative feedback on the content, layout, and delivery of the PSAs.

## Measuring our success:

- Underage drinking is not a top-of-mind issue; less than half of all parents surveyed reported concern.
- Education and conversations with children were the top two ways parents said they could prevent underage drinking.
- Women are much more likely to have talked with their children about underage drinking.
- The majority of parents exposed to the materials said they were believable; a third said the materials left an impression on them.
- A quarter of parents exposed to the PSAs agreed the PSAs were among the best ads they had seen on underage drinking prevention.
- A quarter of parents exposed to the PSAs said they would seek out more information about SAMHSA.
- Parents exposed to the PSAs were much more likely to have talked with their children about the dangers of underage drinking in the last 3 months.
- Parents and caregivers asked for more modeling scenarios in the print PSAs.

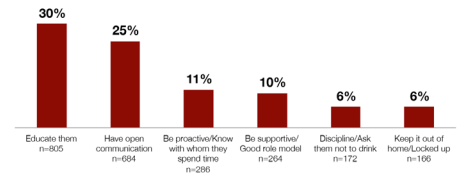
### General Attitude Toward Underage Drinking: by Region

Currently, do you see drinking alcohol as an issue to be concerned about with your child/children?



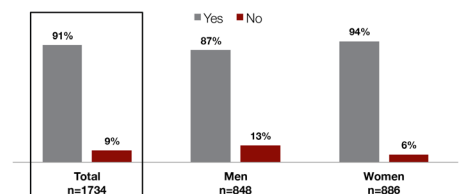
### Preventing Underage Drinking

What could you do to prevent your child/children from drinking alcohol?\*



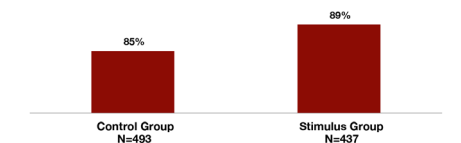
### Discussion of Underage Drinking: by Gender of Parent/Caregiver

Have you ever had a conversation with your child/children about alcohol?



### Discussion with Children About the Dangers of Drinking Alcohol

Within the last three months, have had a conversation with child/children about the dangers of drinking alcohol



<sup>1</sup> Sacks, J.J., Gonzales, K.R., Bouchery, E.E., Tomedi, L.E., & Brewer, R.D. (2015). 2010 National and state costs of excessive alcohol consumption. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 49(5), e73–79.

<sup>2</sup> Miech, R.A., Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., Bachman, J.G., Schulenberg, J.E., & Patrick, M. (2017). *Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975–2016: Volume I, Secondary school students*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ). (2017). *2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed tables*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<sup>4</sup> Dupont, R.L., Han, B., Shea, C.L., & Madras, B.K. (2018). Drug use among youth: National survey data support a common liability of all drug use. *Preventive Medicine*, 113, 68–73.

<sup>5</sup> Hingson, R., Zha, W. & Smyth, D. (2017). Magnitude and trends in heavy episodic drinking, alcohol-impaired driving, and alcohol-related mortality and overdose hospitalizations among emerging adults of college ages 18–24 in the United States, 1998–2014. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 78(4), 540–548.

<sup>6</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2013). Results from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. From <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHresults2012/NSDUHresults2012.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Nash, S. G., McQueen, A., and Bray, J. H. (2005). Pathways to adolescent alcohol use: Family environment, peer influence, and parental expectations. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 37(1), 19–28.

<sup>8</sup> Sieving, R. E., Maruyama, G., Williams, C. L., and Perry, C. L. (2000). Pathways to adolescent alcohol use: Potential mechanisms of parent influence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 10(4), 489–514.

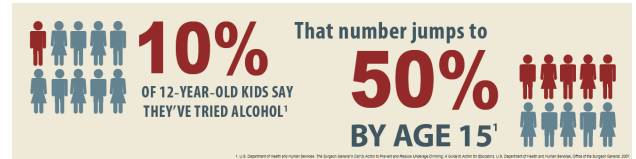
## Empowering Parents to Prevent Underage Drinking

SAMHSA's *Talk. They Hear You.*® Campaign engages parents and caregivers in the prevention of underage drinking. Underage drinking remains a national public health issue, especially among adolescents.



### Parents have significant influence on young people's decisions about alcohol consumption.

- Despite its prevalence, underage drinking is not a top-of-mind issue for parents.
- Children said that parents are the primary messengers for underage drinking prevention.
- To succeed, parents need prompts and conversation starters for talking with their children.



As generations of parents continue to evolve, SAMHSA aims to keep *Talk. They Hear You.*® consistent and relevant. To maintain a lasting message, the Campaign trademarked its logo in 2016. This trademark helps lend credibility to the materials, instills trust in the Campaign, and promotes consistency when organizations implement the Campaign in their communities.



## The Year in Review

In 2017, SAMHSA launched a Quasi-Experimental Case Study at two U.S. middle schools as part of a three-pronged approach to evaluate the *Talk. They Hear You.*® Campaign. The Case Study Evaluation explores details of how exposure to the Campaign affects parent and student attitudes and behaviors. The Case Study Evaluation is ongoing and its findings will supplement SAMHSA's future National Survey evaluation.

Additionally this year, amid the nation's opioid crisis and shifts in marijuana policies in a growing number of states across the country, the *Talk. They Hear You.*® Campaign received additional funding to expand its existing brand to provide substance abuse prevention information beyond alcohol. Recognizing the dynamic national context, SAMHSA is leveraging the *Talk. They Hear You.*® Campaign so parents can be prepared to talk to their children about alcohol and other substances, including marijuana and opioids. To make the Campaign's message more relevant for parent populations in the military, SAMHSA also worked with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) in the last year to tailor content for military families.

## TIMELINE

### May 2013

- Launched *Talk. They Hear You.*®
- Launched Campaign website
- Delivered campaign materials to partners
- Released inaugural PSAs

### December 2013

- Produced new TV PSA, *Mom's Thoughts*

### February 2014

- Released new TV PSA, *Mom's Thoughts*, during 2014 National Prevention Week

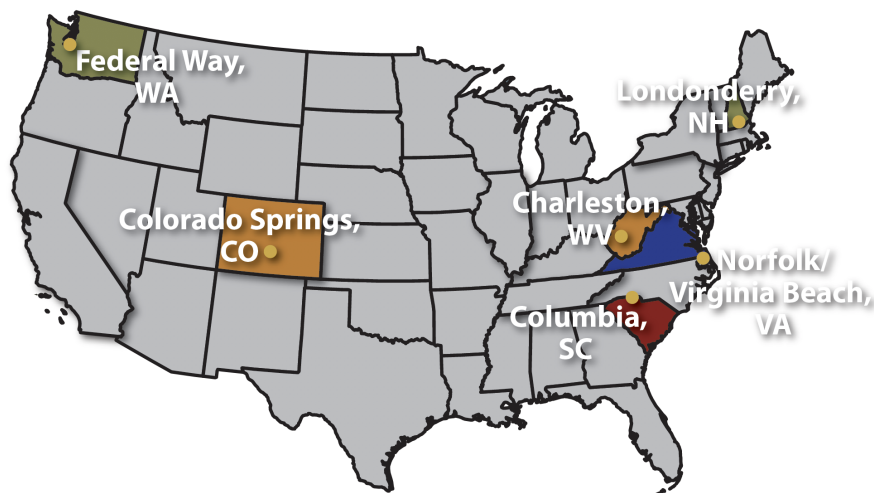


To date, the *Talk. They Hear You.*® earned media Campaign has garnered more than 7 billion impressions valued at \$78.5 million, and has yielded more than an \$8 to \$1 return on investment for every dollar invested.

**Collective promotion activities from June 18, 2017–June 17, 2018 helped drive 53,329 visits to [www.underageddrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underageddrinking.samhsa.gov)—a 55 percent increase from the year prior.**

## PSA Concept Testing and Development

In 2018, SAMHSA developed three new television and radio PSAs: one for military families, one focusing on general substance use prevention across populations, and one for opioid abuse prevention. PSA concepts for each were tested in focus groups in the following six regions:



- Charleston, West Virginia
- Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Columbia, South Carolina
- Federal Way, Washington
- Londonderry, New Hampshire
- Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Virginia



Locations selected allowed access to communities with high rates of opioid use and/or shifting marijuana policies, and allowed for cross-representation of socioeconomic, cultural, educational, and demographic backgrounds. Areas were selected for high concentrations of diverse families with children ages 9 to 15, and when testing PSA concepts for military families, high concentrations of U.S. service members and their families.

The majority of focus group participants favored *Reminiscing* (General Substance Use), *Keeping Our Kids Safe* (Opioids), and *We Do Hear You* (Military) because of their authenticity and relatability. For example:

- Parents in the military focus groups liked how *We Do Hear You* portrayed parents and children having substance use prevention conversations in realistic situations (e.g., in the car, at the breakfast table, etc.).
- Parents preferred *Keeping Our Kids Safe* because it conveyed the message that talking about substance use prevention is a lifelong, ongoing conversation.

### May 2014

- Released *Talk. They Hear You.*® mobile app

### March 2015

- Launched paid advertising campaign on social media
- National Partner Meeting

### December 2015

- Launched #WeTalked social media campaign

### January 2016

- Conducted pilot survey with parents and caregivers of children ages 9 to 15

- Parents liked how transparent and honest the dad was in *Reminiscing*, and felt open communication is important when having effective substance use prevention conversations with kids.

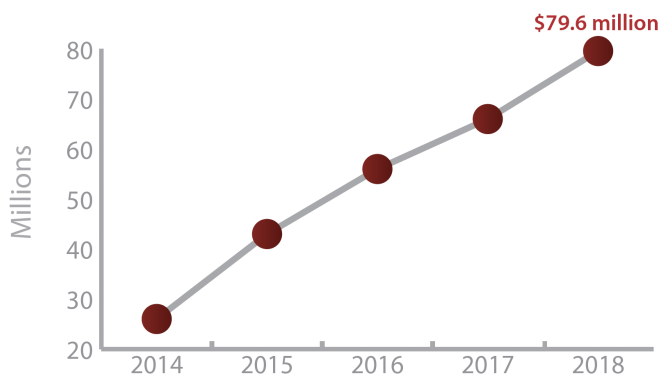
*We Do Hear You* and *Reminiscing* will officially release in summer 2018, and *Keeping Our Kids Safe* will be released in September 2018.

## Reaching Parents Through Relevant Channels

Through June 30, 2018, the **Talk. They Hear You.®** PSAs have appeared in all 50 states and earned more than:

**7.29**  
billion  
impressions

### \$79.6 Million Earned Donated Airtime



Generated an advertising equivalency of more than \$79.6 million across all media outlets

Since launching in 2013, the PSAs have been distributed to more than:



**broadcast  
TV stations**



**cable TV  
stations**

**6,400**



**radio  
outlets**

**3,131**



**print  
outlets**

#### March 2016

- Launched new Spanish-language campaign site, *Hable. Ellos Escuchan.*
- Started production of new Spanish-language TV PSA, *Dinner Table*

#### April 2016

- Launched 30-day paid Facebook campaign to promote mobile app
- Conducted outreach for Alcohol Awareness Month, including 10 new Hispanic/Latino partners

## A Soundtrack for Prevention

In April 2018, **Talk. They Hear You.**® produced its second original soundtrack “You’ve Been Through.” The soundtrack serves as original music in the Campaign’s new PSA, *Reminiscing*, and features talented musicians and custom lyrics to encourage parents to start a conversation about underage drinking and substance use with their children. Among the artists are Liberty DeVitto, and his daughter Torrey DeVitto—a star television actress known for her roles in *Pretty Little Liars* and *Chicago Med*.

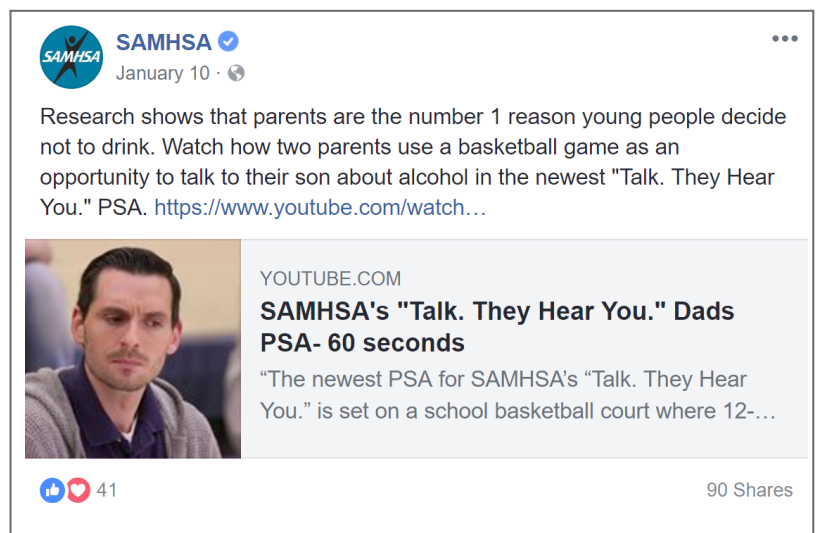
“You’ve Been Through” will launch in summer 2018 and will be available through online music platforms such as Amazon Music, Jango, SoundCloud, and YouTube.



The 2018 soundtrack features talent such as television actress Torrey DeVitto and her father, Liberty DeVitto.

## Online Conversations

Throughout the year, SAMHSA promotes the **Talk. They Hear You.**® Campaign through strategic social media messaging on Facebook and Twitter. Altogether, 12 monthly editorial content calendars were shared with SAMHSA’s Office of Communications for integration into SAMHSA’s overall social media strategy. Content leveraged observances, such as Alcohol Awareness Month (April) and SAMHSA’s National Prevention Week, to share relevant resources and messages with SAMHSA’s followers. SAMHSA shared 47 **Talk. They Hear You.**® social media posts in the last year, which garnered 1,926 engagements (i.e., reactions, comments, shares, etc.) and helped drive traffic to the Campaign website. In the past 12 months, either Facebook or Twitter has been the top referral source to the Campaign website nine times.



**Talk. They Hear You.**® social media posts were retweeted and shared by government agencies and organizations such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The Campaign was also mentioned on social media by more than 50 local community organizations.

### May 2016

- Released new Spanish-language TV PSA during 2016 National Prevention Week

### July 2016

- Launched the new Spanish-language TV PSA, *Hora de Cenar*

### September 2016

- Conducted Media Evaluation Testing with CADCA in original locations where the pilot survey was conducted

### October 2016

- Began PSA Concept Testing for the 2017 *Dads* PSA



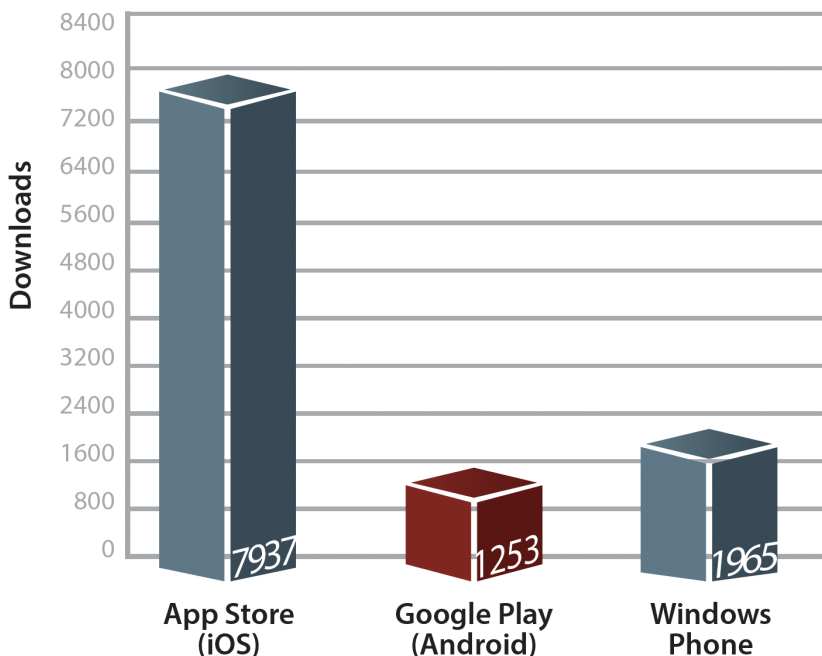
## Building Skills With the *Talk. They Hear You.*® Mobile App

The *Talk. They Hear You.*® mobile app features an interactive simulation that uses avatars to help parents practice bringing up the topic of alcohol, learn the questions to ask, and get ideas for to keep the conversation going.



## Promoting the *Talk. They Hear You.*® Mobile App

The *Talk. They Hear You.*® mobile app garnered 4,856 downloads in the last year—a 214 percent increase from total downloads garnered the year prior.



Total Number  
of Downloads

# 11,155

The mobile app is available  
through the App Store<sup>SM</sup>,  
Google Play<sup>TM</sup>, and the  
Windows<sup>®</sup> Phone.

### December 2016

- Released the first-ever *Talk. They Hear You.*® Soundtrack on Amazon Music
- Started production on the *Dads* PSA and on the new 5-minute Discussion Starter Video

### February 2017

- Officially launched the *Dads* PSA and Discussion Starter Video at SAMHSA's National Prevention Day
- Conducted outreach to partners in conjunction with Alcohol Awareness Month

## Broadening Campaign Reach Through Partners



Members of the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition distributed “Talk. They Hear You.” materials at a CADCA event.

*Talk. They Hear You.*® increased its total number of partners by 107 percent, engaging 222 new national and local organizations at events such as SAMHSA’s 14th Annual Prevention Day, the Pentagon’s Great American Smokeout Wellness Fair, and the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) Mid-year Conference. This outreach resulted in distribution of more than 300 credit card flash drives with the Campaign’s full suite of materials such as postcards, wallet cards, and table tents.



The Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition customized “Talk. They Hear You.” postcards with their logo for their postcard campaign.

In 2017, SAMHSA initiated meaningful partnerships for prevention with groups such as the 525 Foundation, the American Automobile Association (AAA), the Tanana Chiefs Conference (AK), and the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition (MA). For example, the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition in Easthampton, MA, expressed a need for materials that would resonate with their large LGBTQ community. With SAMHSA’s help, the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition ran *Talk. They Hear You.*® PSAs on local television and radio channels, conducted a four-postcard campaign targeting eighth grade parents, ran a paid Facebook ad campaign, and utilized

*Talk. They Hear You.*® images on their website. SAMHSA also worked with the coalition to provide them with high-quality Campaign photos that featured two moms and their son, which the coalition used to purchase billboard ad space in their county.

Collaboration resulted in a significant increase in mobile application downloads and led to Massachusetts being one of the top 10 states to drive traffic to [www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking](http://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking).

**Partnerships like this have helped the Campaign earn more than 21,990 in donated labor hours from local community organizations, which equates to approximately 11 Full-Time Employees (FTEs) and \$470,000 in estimated salary.**

### May 2017

- Garnered 8,000 *Talk. They Hear You.*® soundtrack plays during National Prevention Week

### October 2017

- Launched Quasi-Experimental Case Study Evaluation

### November 2017

- Hosted first *Talk. They Hear You.*® virtual stakeholder meeting
- Collaborated with DoD officials on PSA concepts

# Community Engagement

In November 2017, SAMHSA launched its first ever *Talk. They Hear You.*® virtual quarterly meeting series, to create a forum for community groups to share their best practices for local underage drinking prevention. Topics discussed (e.g., underage drinking prevention in rural communities) are selected and driven based on stakeholder input. Each virtual meeting spotlights a local community group, such as a public health department, coalition or school district, and how their community is promoting parent-to-child prevention conversations. Examples of groups SAMHSA has spotlighted in past virtual events include:

- Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition located in Easthampton, MA
- Center for Prevention and Counseling located in Newton, NJ
- Manhasset Coalition Against Substance Abuse located in Manhasset, NY
- Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Arden Arcade located in Sacramento, CA
- Sacramento County Coalition for Youth located in Sacramento, CA

In the last year, the Campaign has hosted four virtual stakeholder meetings to promote collaboration and engagement, resulting in garnering a combined total of 217 meeting registrants, 120 of which attended the virtual event. This attendance rate of 55 percent is noticeably higher than the industry standard that considers 35 to 45 percent to be strong attendance. Notable attendees included representatives from the New Jersey Department of Mental Health and AAA National. The Campaign’s virtual stakeholder meetings are also attended by leaders from National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors and National Prevention Network (NPN) representatives from Montana and Vermont.

## Continuing to Evolve



To prevent underage drinking and other drug misuse and empower parents to talk to their kids about it, *Talk. They Hear You.*® continues to grow. Upcoming activities include:

- Creating new *Talk. They Hear You.*® products that resonate with educators. Concepts will be tested in focus groups among target audiences.
- Evaluating the Campaign to inform future approaches. This will include convening a technical expert advisory panel for input, implementing a national survey for feedback, and conducting a national trends analysis.
- Exploring opportunities to refine the Campaign’s existing mobile application.
- Continue expanding Campaign outreach to all parents and caregivers of children under age 21. Historically the Campaign has focused on reaching parents and caregivers of children ages 9 to 15 for early intervention. In 2018 the Campaign started expanding to provide resources for parents and caregivers of all children under the age of 21.



SAMHSA spotlighted the Center for Prevention and Counseling in one of the virtual stakeholder meetings. The slide above shows the community they reached with the Campaign.

### March 2018

- Campaign PSAs exceeded 7 billion impressions

### April 2018

- Produced second official *Talk. They Hear You.*® soundtrack

### May 2018

- Produced three new *Talk. They Hear You.*® PSAs: one for military families, one for

prevention of alcohol or other substance use; and one for opioid abuse prevention

The logo for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). It features the word "SAMHSA" in a large, bold, white, italicized sans-serif font. The background of the entire page is composed of large, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of blue, red, olive green, and cream, creating a dynamic, layered effect.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

5600 Fishers Lane

Rockville, MD 20857

877-SAMHSA-7 (877-726-4727)

800-487-4889 (TDD)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>