



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES: Media Toolkit

## Overview & Table of Contents

To assist in your outreach efforts, the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> communications team has developed this media toolkit for your use. This series of turnkey materials can be used with media outlets, stakeholders, and others to spread the word about the campaign, increase use of campaign information and resources, and encourage conversations with young people to prevent underage drinking and substance use.

Available for review and, in many cases, tailoring and editing are the following:

- A. Key Messages & Talking Points
- B. News Release Template: Announcing Local Launch of Campaign
- C. Opinion Piece Template
- D. Letter to the Editor Template
- E. Newsletter Blurbs
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Wherever appropriate, step-by-step instructions are provided with the materials. Because each community is unique, the materials can be easily tailored to meet your specific needs. Should you have any questions about these materials and how best to use them, the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> communications team is available to assist you.

**Contact:** “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign, [Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov](mailto:Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov)





## A. Key Messages & Talking Points

The messages and talking points provided below communicate key facts about underage drinking and substance use, the consequences of use, and how the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign is providing information and resources for parents and caregivers to address these issues with young people. These messages and talking points can serve as the foundation for all communications—whether interviews with reporters, news releases, e-newsletter articles, tweets, or Facebook posts.

### Underage Drinking and Substance Use Are Serious Problems

#### *Underage Drinking*

**Some kids start drinking at a young age**—Many young people start drinking before the age of 15. A quarter of teens ages 14–15 said they have tried alcohol at some time in their lives, and the proportion increases to 44 percent for teens ages 16–17.

**Alcohol can affect brain function**—Alcohol use can permanently impair brain function by affecting the actual physical development of the brain structure. Negative effects include decreased ability in planning, executive functioning, memory, spatial operations, and attention.

**Alcohol can lead to other substance use**—Alcohol use is associated with a greater likelihood of using other substances, including marijuana and tobacco.

#### *Marijuana*

**Marijuana can harm adolescent brain development**—Marijuana use distorts how adolescent minds perceive the world, causing poor judgment and decision-making—e.g., having unprotected sex and driving while intoxicated. Marijuana use can cause a lack of balance and coordination, increasing injury risk for activities such as driving and sports. It is also linked to earlier onset of psychosis in youths known to be at risk for schizophrenia.

**Marijuana is addictive**—One in six young people who use marijuana before the age of 18 become addicted.

**Marijuana use can lead to use disorder**—Recent data suggest that 30 percent of those who use marijuana may have some degree of marijuana use disorder.

**Marijuana has negative health consequences**—The compounds in marijuana can [affect the circulatory system](#) and may increase the risk of [heart attacks](#) and [strokes](#). Smoking marijuana can lead to a greater risk of bronchitis, cough, and phlegm production. Marijuana users are significantly more likely than nonusers to [develop chronic mental disorders](#), including schizophrenia.



## Opioids

**Prescription pain medication can be addictive**—Even if a doctor prescribes opioids there are still risks when taking them, including addiction and death. In 2018, an estimated 10.3 million people age 12 or older reported having misused opioids in the previous year.

**Misusing prescription pain medication is unsafe and illegal**—It is illegal to take a prescription medication without a doctor’s prescription. Taking prescription medications that aren’t prescribed to you (even just one time) can land you in the hospital or even cause death.

**Mixing prescription medication with alcohol can be fatal**—Mixing opioids with other substances can cause dangerous side effects, including breathing trouble, coma, and even permanent brain damage or death.

## The Consequences of Underage Drinking and Substance Use Can Be Devastating

**The consequences of underage drinking and substance use can include:**

- Injury or death from accidents;
- Unintended, unwanted, and unprotected sexual activity;
- Mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety disorders;
- Difficulty with attention, concentration, problem-solving, learning, and memory; and/or
- Allergic reactions, breathing trouble, coma, and even permanent brain damage or death.

## Underage Drinking and Substance Use Are Not Top-of-Mind Concerns Among Many Parents

- Many parents with children under the age of 21 don’t believe underage drinking and substance use are issues to be concerned about and may not have conversations with their kids surrounding these topics.
- Research suggests that one of the most influential factors for a child’s healthy development is a strong, open relationship with a parent.
- Parents have a significant influence on their children’s decisions to experiment with alcohol or other drugs.
- Over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether to drink alcohol.
- When parents create supportive and nurturing environments, children make better decisions.
- The “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign is designed to provide parents and caregivers with the information and resources they need to properly address underage drinking and substance use with their children.



**“Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> Provides Parents With Knowledge, Resources, and Confidence**

- The campaign uses social media, a website [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov), partnership outreach, and radio, television, and print public service announcements to help parents feel more confident and well-equipped when talking with their children about alcohol and other drugs.
- Campaign messages:
  - Emphasize the importance of parents talking to their kids about underage drinking and substance use prevention before they reach an age when they are confronted with decisions about it;
  - Offer advice to parents about preparing children to deal with peer pressure that may lead to alcohol and substance use;
  - Focus on helping parents address the issue of underage drinking and substance use in a manner that emphasizes their children’s ability to make their own decisions; and
  - Model behaviors and situations when parents can begin the conversation about the risks of alcohol and substance use with their children.

**B. News Release Template: Announcing Local Launch of Campaign**

*The news release template provided below can be tailored to include information about your local campaign/organization effort, as well as quotes from your spokespeople. Following the template are instructions on how to submit a news release to media outlets.*

**For Immediate Release:**  
**MONTH DAY, 2019**

**Contact:**  
**NAME**  
**EMAIL**  
**PHONE**

**[NAME of YOUR LOCAL CAMPAIGN/ORG]** Joins Forces With the National Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup>

*The campaign guides parents and caregivers to engage in conversations with young people about the risks of alcohol and substance misuse.*

**City, State**— Over 80 percent of young people ages 10 to 18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether or not to drink alcohol. Yet many parents do not have these important conversations. As part of our commitment to supporting local youth, **(Name of your town)** is pleased to announce a new partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign.

Working together, parents and caregivers will now have access to campaign materials and support aimed at equipping them with information, skills, and confidence to talk with youths about the risks of underage drinking and substance use.

According to the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, alcohol continues to be the most widely misused substance among our nation’s young people. However, in recent years, other drugs, such as marijuana and





prescription pain medication, have become increasingly prevalent among youths. (Name of your town) is no different.

[Insert quote from your campaign/organization explaining why prevention is important and a few sentences summarizing how you plan to use the campaign in your community. For example:]

“In our community, statistics reflect (put local stats here),” said NAME. “The ‘Talk. They Hear You.’<sup>®</sup> campaign will help to address these alarming statistics by enhancing our local effort to educate citizens on the risks and consequences of substance misuse. The information and materials available through the campaign will augment parents’ and caregivers’ commitment to talk with children about the risks of alcohol and other drugs.”

SAMHSA’s “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign is a national media campaign with a host of useful resources for parents, including fact sheets, brochures, infographics, and public service announcements.

Historically, the campaign has equipped parents with the knowledge and skills to increase actions that reduce and prevent underage drinking. Recently, it has expanded its messaging to include other substances, such as marijuana and prescription drugs. The campaign now offers resources to assist parents in talking with young children about those other drugs.

For more information about “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> and how parents and caregivers can help prevent underage drinking and other drug use, visit [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov).

###

## Step by Step: How to Submit a News Release

### 1. Determine target publications for submitting the news release.

The publication(s) that will be most interested in “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> will be daily and community newspapers, as well as those that focus on health issues or the youth population.

### 2. Identify the right reporter at each publication.

You will need to identify the health reporter at each outlet by reviewing the publication to see who is writing the health stories. If the outlet does not have a dedicated health reporter, identify the news editor instead. And if the reporter’s email address is not available online, call the publication to request it.

### 3. Send the news release.

Equipped with your list of reporters and your news release embedded into the body of the email, prepare a separate, personalized email for each reporter. Your email can be as simple as:

**Email subject line:**

NAME of YOUR LOCAL CAMPAIGN/ORGANIZATION Joins National Effort to Prevent Alcohol and Drug Misuse

**Body of email:**



Dear **NAME**:

We are excited to share our news! **NAME of YOUR LOCAL CAMPAIGN/ORGANIZATION** recently joined forces with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s national underage drinking prevention and substance use campaign, called “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> The campaign provides parents and caregivers with the resources they need to have conversations with young people about the risks of alcohol and substance use.

If you would like to speak with a spokesperson to learn more about this new collaboration, please email or call **NAME, PHONE**.

**Insert news release copy directly in body of email below.**

**4. Call to follow up.**

Follow-up is important. You can send the most brilliant news release, but it’s very unlikely to be published unless you call and make a compelling pitch to get the story covered.

**5. Once it has appeared, let us know!**

We want to share in your success! Please let us know once a local story has appeared by sending an email to the campaign team at [Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov](mailto:Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov).

**C. Opinion Piece Template**

*The boilerplate opinion piece provided below can be tailored to tie into your local breaking news. You can also include state-/city-specific statistics on opioid and other substance misuse, as well as underage drinking. After the boilerplate is information on how to submit an opinion piece to media outlets.*

**Every Day Is the Right Day to Talk With Kids About Alcohol and Substance Misuse**

***Parents and caregivers are encouraged to engage in honest and authentic conversations about the effects of underage drinking and substance use.***

I recently learned about **tailor to reflect yourself and your local involvement with the campaign** a national underage drinking and substance use initiative called **“Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup>** through my work here in **name of city/community** with **name of local partner**. I was excited to learn that the campaign’s mission is to provide parents and caregivers with information and resources to get the conversation started about the risks of underage drinking and substance use.

One of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. Over 80 percent of young people ages 10 to 18 say their parents are the leading influence in their decision about whether or not to drink alcohol. The “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign offers resources on talking with youths about alcohol and drug abuse—and in a way that resonates with them.

It is important to have these conversations with children while they are young. Although less than 8 percent of those ages 12–13 said they had tried alcohol and less than 2 percent had tried marijuana, by ages 16–17, those proportions jump to almost half and nearly one-third, respectively.



The bottom line is that by talking often with our children about the risks of underage drinking and substance use, we have a greater chance of influencing their positive decisions.

The “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign’s website, at [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov), sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is an excellent place to find the information and resources needed to get the conversation started.

**NAME** is **TITLE** at **AFFILIATION** in **CITY**.

###

## Step by Step: How to Get an Opinion Piece Published

### 1. Decide which publication(s) to target for the opinion piece.

Begin with the daily newspaper in your community that reaches the greatest percentage of the population. Since your target audience is parents and caregivers, your audience is essentially the community at large. If the first publication on the list declines the column, then you can send it to the second-largest paper, and so on.

### 2. Identify someone to author your opinion piece.

Seek out a local leader/spokesperson/parent/caregiver who has a high profile and is respected among your local community members. This person/spokesperson will be the individual who will eventually sign and submit the opinion piece to the newspaper.

### 3. Find out who is in charge of editorials at your local paper.

Every newspaper has someone who handles requests for editorial submissions. These people are identified on the newspaper’s website under editorial page staff or letters-to-the-editor staff. If you can’t find the contact information on a website, simply call the newspaper’s general number and request the contact information for submission of an opinion piece

### 4. Submit your opinion piece.

Submit the opinion piece from the author’s email according to submission instructions provided by the newspaper. The author should include his/her phone number in case the newspaper/editor has any follow-up questions.

**NOTE:** An opinion piece can be submitted to only **one** newspaper at a time. Therefore, request a timely response of 72 hours for the newspaper to reply with a “yes” or “no” decision. Only after the opinion piece has been declined or 72 hours has passed can you submit the piece to the next paper on your list.

### 5. Call to follow up.



Follow-up is important. You can send the most brilliant opinion piece, but it’s very unlikely to be published unless you call and make a compelling pitch to get the opinion piece published.

**6. Once it has appeared, let us know!**

We want to share in your success! Please let us know when an opinion piece has appeared in your newspaper. Please send a link to the opinion piece to the campaign team at [Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov](mailto:Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov).

**D. Letter to the Editor Template**

*Underage drinking and substance use are topics that are often covered in the news. A letter to the editor after the publication of a news story on these topics in your local paper is an easy and effective way to raise awareness of “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> and encourage parents and caregivers to visit the campaign website to obtain information. The letter to the editor template provided below can be tailored to submit to your local paper.*

Dear Editor:

I read with great interest a recent article, “**HEADLINE of ARTICLE,**” which appeared in your paper on **DATE**. As indicated, underage drinking and substance use are prevalent in communities across the country, including ours, and I wanted to make you aware of an important resource to help combat these issues.

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. Over 80 percent of young people ages 10 to 18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether or not to drink. Motivated by this research, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration initiated the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign. The campaign provides guidance, information, and materials for parents and caregivers to use in talking with kids about the risks of underage drinking and substance use—in a way that resonates with them.

It is important that parents have these conversations with their children while they are young. Research shows that though less than 8 percent of those ages 12–13 say they have tried alcohol and less than 2 percent have tried marijuana, by ages 16–17, those proportions jump to almost half and nearly one-third, respectively.

For more information about “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> and how parents and caregivers can help prevent underage drinking and other drug use, visit [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov).

Best regards,

**[NAME]**

**[TITLE]**

**[EMAIL ADDRESS]**

**[DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER]**



## Step by Step: How to Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor

### 1. Identify the newspaper you wish to target.

Small community newspapers are some of the most read media outlets in the country, and they are more likely to print the letters they receive. It is more challenging to get a letter printed in a major metropolitan newspaper, unless it is written in response to an article the paper has recently published.

### 2. Check the newspaper submission guidelines for the outlet you are targeting.

Check the newspaper’s website or the editorial page of the print version for information about submitting a letter to the editor. Most newspapers have an online submission form that you can use.

### 3. Keep your letter brief and to the point.

Letters to the editor should be concise. Typically, newspapers have a 200–300-word limit for letters. Make sure you know the word limit for the publications you are targeting.

### 4. Localize your letter.

Reference an article from that publication that relates to the topic (i.e., underage drinking and substance use). Explain how the topic/subject (of your letter impacts the readership/community who is the target audience of the newspaper. Lend credibility to your letter by noting your professional experiences in the community that prompted you to write on the topic.

### 5. Include your name, title, email address, and daytime phone number.

Editors like to confirm that the letter was actually written by the person whose name is on it. Also, be sure to provide your professional title and affiliation as it lends credibility to your letter.

### 6. Once it’s printed, let us know!

We want to share in your success! Please let us know once your letter has been printed by sending an email to the campaign team at [Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov](mailto:Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov).

## E. Newsletter Blurbs

*The newsletter blurbs provided below can be tailored with your local campaign information and then offered to local partners, schools, and other organizations willing to include/promote “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> with their internal audiences in their newsletters and other communications materials. Of course, you are always encouraged to craft your own blurbs and share them with your local organizations.*



Blurb #1

**PARENTS: Every Day Is the Right Day to Talk About Alcohol and Drugs With Your Children**

Talking with your children at an early age about drinking and drug use is the first step toward keeping them safe. For tips on how—and when—to begin the conversation, visit [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov).

Blurb #2

**The School Dance Is Almost Here. Have You Talked With Your Children About Your Expectations When It Comes to Alcohol and Drugs?**

Talk with your children about what to do if they are faced with a decision about alcohol or other drugs. For example, they could text a code word to a family member. Practice the exit plan in a safe environment. For tips on how—and when—to begin the conversation, visit [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov).

Blurb #3

**PARENTS: Talk With Your Children About Alcohol and Other Drugs Ahead of Spring Break**

Young people are more likely to listen when they know you’re on their side. Explain why you don’t want your child to drink or use other drugs. “Because I said so” is not good enough. Tell your child it’s because you want him/her to be happy and safe. For tips on how—and when—to begin the conversation, visit [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov).

**Step by Step: How to Approach a Local Partner or Organization**

The “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign can be bolstered through partnerships with supportive community partners, schools, and other organizations. In addition to asking them to include the newsletter blurbs in communications to their members, you can also adjust the email below to ask for their support in general.

**Email subject line:**

Seeking Your Help to Raise Awareness of SAMHSA’s “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> Campaign

**Body of email:**

Hello **NAME**,

My name is **NAME**, and I am **TITLE and AFFILIATION** with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign.

“Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> is a national media campaign that provides guidance, information, and materials for parents and caregivers to use in talking with kids about the risks of underage drinking and substance use—in a way that resonates with them. Research shows that many parents don’t have these important conversations with their children, despite the fact that they are a leading influencer on their children’s decisions about whether to drink or use drugs.

The health and well-being of our community’s young people is a team effort, and I’m asking for your help to get the word out about the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign. Please consider providing the “informational blurbs” below in an upcoming newsletter or social media post.

**INSERT SELECTED BLURBS HERE**

Lastly, if you are interested in a collaborative effort to inform your audiences about “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup>, please let me know when you are available for a meeting or call. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to combat this important issue.



Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**NAME**

**TITLE, AFFILIATION**

## F. Step by Step: How to Pitch a Story to TV

*Pitching a story to a television station is different from pitching a story to a print reporter. Because TV is a visual medium, you will want to offer the producer an on-camera interview with a spokesperson, a parent/caregiver, and/or a young person who has benefited from the campaign. You can also provide visuals such as a campaign poster or other products.*

- 1. Determine which television station(s) and health producer(s) to pitch the story to.**  
Most local television stations have health segments. Identify the television station(s) that you want to reach, and then seek out the health producer, who will be the person to contact with your story idea.
- 2. Prepare to send your pitch.**  
Equipped with your list of contacts (prepare a separate email for each contact), write a brief note that could be as simple as:

**Email subject line:**

Raising Awareness of SAMHSA’s “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> Campaign

**Body of email:**

Dear **NAME**:

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. Over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether or not to drink.

Motivated by this research, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) initiated the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign. The campaign provides guidance, information, and materials for parents and caregivers to use in talking with kids about the risks of underage drinking and substance use—and in a way that resonates with them.

We hope you will consider preparing a segment with **[SPOKESPERSON/TITLE]** to discuss the following topics:

- At what age can parents start talking with their kids about drinking and drugs?
- Are kids really listening to their parents?
- How do you answer questions such as these: If drinking is bad, why do you drink? When did you have your first drink? Did you ever smoke marijuana? Why don’t you let me go to parties?
- Where can parents and caregivers go to find information to help them get the conversation started?

To discuss this story package, please contact **[NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]**.



**3. Send the email pitch.**

As mentioned in step 2, send a separate email to each contact on your list. Make sure you have included your phone number and email address for follow-up questions.

**4. Call to follow up.**

Follow-up is important. The story is unlikely to materialize unless you call and make a compelling pitch, which includes offering an interview with a spokesperson and suggestions for visuals. An effective follow-up call will stress why “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> is a useful resource for viewers.

**5. Work with the producer and prepare your spokesperson.**

Once you get the green light from a producer, work with him/her to fully understand the angle that he/she wishes to pursue. Equipped with that information, you will then be able to help in securing needed visual elements, as well as prepare a spokesperson with the campaign key messages and talking points.

**6. Once it airs, let us know!**

We want to share in your success! Please let us know once your story airs on a television station by sending an email to the campaign team at [Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov](mailto:Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov).

**G. Public Service Announcement Outreach**

*There are a variety of public service announcements (PSAs)—radio, print, and television—available for your use via the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> website. Upon your review and selection of the PSAs that best appropriately reflect the goals of your outreach effort, please use the tips below to submit and place your PSAs.*

**Step by Step: How to Approach a Media Outlet With a PSA**

**1. Determine which outlet(s) to submit the PSA to.**

The media outlets that will be most interested in “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> will be those that have a format to air PSAs and also reach a general audience/general community.

**2. Identify the right contact at each media outlet.**

You will need to identify the PSA contact at each outlet.

**3. Prepare to send the PSA.**

Equipped with your list of contacts and a link to the PSAs that you have selected for each outlet, write a brief email to each contact (embed a hyperlink that goes directly to the PSAs). Here is a sample email:



**Email subject line:**

Raising Awareness of SAMHSA’s “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> Campaign

**Body of email:**

Dear **NAME**:

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. Over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether or not to drink.

Motivated by this research, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) initiated the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign. The campaign provides guidance, information, and materials for parents and caregivers to use in talking with kids about the risks of underage drinking and substance use, and it does so in a way that resonates with them.

Please consider using this public service announcements ([hyperlink to the PSAs you suggest they use or hyperlink to the entire PSA section on the campaign website](#)) to raise awareness of the campaign’s valuable information and resources with your audience. We are seeking to increase awareness of the campaign as much as possible and would appreciate maximum exposure of the PSAs.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you would like to speak with a campaign spokesperson.

**NAME**

**TITLE, AFFILIATION**

**4. Send the PSAs.**

As mentioned in step 3, send a separate email to each contact on your list. Make sure you have included your phone number and email address for follow-up questions.

**5. Call to follow up.**

Follow-up is important. A PSA is unlikely to be used unless you call and make a compelling pitch. An effective follow-up call will stress why “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> is an important resource for the outlet’s audience.

**6. Once it’s used, let us know!**

We want to share in your success! Please let us know once your PSA is used by sending an email to the campaign team at [Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov](mailto:Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov).

**H. Social Media Outreach Best Practices**

**Social Media Engagement**

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, can be a powerful tool for raising awareness of the “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> campaign information and materials. Below are sample Facebook posts and tweets, along with best practices that may be helpful in your social media outreach efforts.



## Sample Facebook Posts

### Sample #1

PARENTS: Did you know that kids as young as 12 are trying marijuana? Check out this brochure for more information about the risks of youth marijuana use and how you can help prevent it.

[https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/marijuana-brochure-newpics-r15f\\_508c.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/marijuana-brochure-newpics-r15f_508c.pdf)

### Sample #2

PARENTS: Get in the habit of having brief conversations about underage drinking and substance use with your children. Watch this new PSA, featuring “Chicago Med” actress Torrey DeVitto, and start talking today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8TpsE60K20>

### Sample #3

PARENTS: Talking to your children about underage drinking and substance use directly and honestly makes them more likely to respect your rules about alcohol and other drugs. Use SAMHSA’s 5 Conversation Goals to talk with your kids today.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/parent-resources/five-conversation-goals>

### Sample #4

The odds that children will use alcohol increase as they get older. Help your children make smart decisions by talking with them early about underage drinking. Download this mobile app for tips on how to start the conversation.

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

## Composing Facebook Posts:

Facebook posts don’t have the same limits as Twitter, but that doesn’t mean you should go overboard. Here are some tips on composing Facebook posts:

- **Stand out!** Remember that users are scrolling through a lot of content on Facebook; your post needs to be clear and focused to stand out.
- **Focus on a single topic.** If you have multiple items you want to address on Facebook, put each in its own post. This will help focus the content and give you more to post.
- **Tag like-minded groups or pages.** Are there other organizations or individuals on Facebook you can tag in your posts? Tagging helps draw their attention to posts and bring them into the conversation.
- **Leverage visuals.** Pictures, videos, infographics, and other visual content are great for Facebook posts. Include them in your posts to make content stand out and improve engagement.



- **Make it manageable.** Your Facebook feed shouldn't be overwhelming. We suggest having a variety of people contribute content to it, with a single point of contact in charge of administering the page.
- **Plan ahead.** You should plan your Facebook posts in advance, coordinating your tweets and regular external communications.
- **Be frequent—but not too frequent.** Optimally, you should post two to three times a day and respond to questions and comments quickly. Develop a response template to help you address questions, comments, and questionable posts.
- **Follow the 80/20 rule.** Eighty percent of your content should be helpful, educational, or entertaining. Twenty percent should be promotion focused.
- **Highlight activities.** Consider promoting posts, starring stories, or pinning posts to highlight or emphasize an important activity.
- **Keep it concise.** Try to keep posts at 250 characters or fewer to allow them to be viewed in their entirety in the news feed.

### Sample Tweets

#### Sample #1

#Parents: Did you know that kids as young as 12 are trying marijuana? Check out this “Talk. They Hear You.”<sup>®</sup> brochure for more information about the risks of youth marijuana use and how you can help prevent it.

[https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/marijuana-brochure-newpics-r15f\\_508c.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/marijuana-brochure-newpics-r15f_508c.pdf)

#### Sample #2

#Parents: Get in the habit of having brief conversations about underage drinking and substance use with your children. Watch this new #TTHY PSA, featuring @NBCChicagoMed actress @TorryDeVitto, and start talking today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8TpsE60K20>

#### Sample #3

#Parents: Talking to your children about #underagedrinking and #substanceuse directly and honestly makes them more likely to respect your rules about alcohol and other drugs. Use SAMHSA's 5 Conversation Goals to talk to your kids today.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/parent-resources/five-conversation-goals>

#### Sample #4

The odds that children will use alcohol increase as they get older. Help your children make smart decisions by talking with them early about underage drinking. Download the #TTHY mobile app for tips on how to start the conversation. <https://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/mobile-application>

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



## Composing Tweets:

Tweets are limited to 280 characters, so they are intentionally brief. Here are some tips on composing tweets:

- **Use only one tweet per topic.** If you have multiple items you want to address, put each in its own tweet. It's okay if you tweet them within a few minutes of each other.
- **Leverage your relationships.**
  - **Retweet.** If you see a tweet that is relevant and you particularly like, retweet it. This strengthens your relationship with the original tweeter and is faster than coming up with new content.
  - **Use mentions.** When you refer to another organization in a tweet, it's notified that you've mentioned it. This helps build your relationships and get your campaign/organization noticed.
  - **Monitor your campaign/organization.** Click your **notifications** tab to see who has mentioned you. Retweet relevant tweets to your followers and include this in your planning.
  - **Twitter trends.** Engage with Twitter's trending topics if they relate to your activities or underage drinking and substance use. Be sure to read about the trend first, to make sure it's appropriate.
  - **Use different Twitter formats.** Organize or join Twitter events, such as Twitter chats and town halls. Be sure to include the event's hashtag to delineate conversation.
- **Use hashtags.** Hashtags help categorize tweets. When you type “#drugmisuse” or “#health” in your tweet and you have a public account, anyone who does a search for drug misuse or health topics may find your tweet.
- **Shorten URLs.** Twitter counts any link as 23 characters but using longer links—especially for news articles—can look ugly. To save space for the content of tweets, try to use a URL shortener. Free URL shorteners include **Bitly** and **Google URL Shortener.**
  - **Make it manageable.** Because Twitter content is ideally posted several times a day, it can seem like an overwhelming endeavor. We found it is helpful to have a number of people contribute content, with a single manager in charge of posting it.
  - **Planning.** Planning your tweets in advance can also help you be strategic in your communication and management of the workload. Tweets can be written in advance, and a program such as **Hootsuite** can be used to schedule them to post automatically.
  - **Frequency.** Optimally, you should tweet several times per day. A tweet has a lifespan of about an hour, so be sure to space tweets out.