



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES: Event Planning Toolkit

Thank you for your interest in organizing a “Talk. They Hear You.”® educational event in your community. To help you implement a successful event, this event planning toolkit and customizable materials will make preparation and implementation as easy and seamless as possible.

This document includes everything you need to know, from identifying and inviting speakers and audience members to creating an event agenda, organizing logistics, and inviting media.

Contact the campaign at Underage.Drinking@samhsa.gov if you need additional information or have questions.

Event Planning Toolkit Sections Include:

Planning It All Out

- An overall timeline for planning and hosting an event

Hosting an Event

- How to plan and execute an event
- A sample event agenda
- Handouts for attendees
- A feedback form

Invitations & Crowd Building

- How to approach a local partner or organization
- A sample e-newsletter article
- Social media engagement
- A promotional flyer
- An email invitation

Reaching Out to Local Media

- Notifying media about event
- How to contact a local reporter
- A sample media advisory to alert reporters of the upcoming event
- A sample news release summarizing the outcome of the event



Final Preparations for Event

- Organizing a pre-event call with speakers
- Sending email reminders
- Creating a day-of-event timeline
- Capturing the event in photos

Post-event To-Do List

- Sample thank-you notes
- Social media engagement

Planning it All Out

Timeline for Planning and Hosting Your Event

The following is a step-by-step timeline for planning and hosting a “[Talk. They Hear You.](#)” educational event from beginning to end. Think of this as a checklist to ensure everything that needs to happen is done on time, leaving no surprises or missed tasks. Keep in mind that this timeline is simply a suggestion of activities/tasks that can change based on your unique event.

PRE-EVENT TACTICS		
10–12 Weeks Before	Outreach to Determine Event Host	A local campaign representative or individual advocate reaches out to the community to determine a host for the educational event.
10 Weeks Before	Identify Attendees	Identify whom you will invite and how you will reach out to them (e.g., parents, caregivers, educators, parent–teacher associations [PTAs], youth-based organizational leaders, volunteer first responders, local religious communities, youths).
10 Weeks Before	Identify Speakers	Build a speakers list, including a campaign spokesperson, parent and/or caregiver, educator, student, etc.
10 Weeks Before		Distribute personal invitations to speakers from the event host.
8 Weeks Before		Suggested deadline for confirming speaker acceptance.



PRE-EVENT TACTICS		
8 Weeks Before	Select Venue	Select and confirm event venue. It could be a local school, house of worship, organization headquarters, or living room in someone's home. Consider the size of the room, audiovisual (AV) needs, ease of travel for speakers and attendees, etc.
8 Weeks Before	Speaker & Agenda Preparation	Hold a conference call with confirmed speakers to discuss the potential agenda and topics for each speaker.
8 Weeks Before		Based on the conference call, develop an event agenda from the template (provided below), including timing for the event.
6 Weeks Before		Review informational materials housed on the campaign website, and send a link to the materials to all speakers who will be participating in the event.
6 Weeks Before	Event Invitations & Attendance Building	Using the template (included), create a flyer that can be printed and/or emailed to promote the event.
6 Weeks Before		Mail and/or email flyer to schools, PTAs, houses of worship, community organizations, etc., for distribution to build audience attendance.
4 Weeks Before		Post event information on social media, including Facebook and Twitter, and share with followers/friends/like-minded organizations for cross-promotion.
3 Weeks Before		Customize the email invitation using the template (included), and send it to potential event attendees.
2 Weeks Before		Tailor the media advisory template to your event (included), and email the advisory to local reporters and media outlets. Follow up with phone calls.
2 Weeks Before		Prepare packets for event attendees, including campaign fact sheets and other selected campaign materials.



PRE-EVENT TACTICS

2 Weeks Before	Materials Preparation & Attendee and Speaker Follow-up	Prepare sign-in sheet(s) for event attendees.
2 Weeks Before		Send a follow-up email invitation to potential attendees.
2 Weeks Before		Continue to share event details and the invitation on social media.
2 Weeks Before		If needed, convene a call/meeting with speakers to finalize roles/responsibilities and the timing of event.
2 Weeks Before		Send follow-up pitch emails to media and confirm their attendance.
1 Week Before		Email final event invitation to potential attendees who have not RSVP'd.
1 Week Before		Prepare news release from template (included) for distribution after the event.
1 Week Before		Identify and contact an attendee who might be willing to take pictures during the event.
1 Week Before	Food, Beverage, & Room Preparation	Determine and order food and beverages.
1 Week Before		Finalize number of chairs and tables needed, as well as the timing for setup.

EVENT TACTICS

Day Before	Launch Event	Send a reminder email to all attendees, speakers, and media members.
2 Hours Before		Finalize room setup. Check AV. Put out refreshments.
1 Hour Before		Set up registration, displaying the sign-in sheet and packets of registration materials. Prepare to receive guests.
Start Time		Check in attendees and greet media; speakers present.



POST-EVENT TACTICS		
Immediately After	Wrap Up	Send press release about event to media, and make an event spokesperson available for interviews.
Immediately After		Transcribe sign-in sheet to make note of who attended.
2–3 Days After		Distribute personalized thank-you notes to speakers and attendees, inviting them to visit the campaign website.
Up to 1 Week After		Share event photos with speakers and others as appropriate, and post on social media and the website.
Pending Newsletter Content Deadline		Write up a few paragraphs about the event as a debrief that can help with future event planning. Include how many people attended, what was discussed, how it was received, etc. Send this to the campaign team at underage.drinking@samhsa.gov .

Hosting an Event

How to Plan and Execute Your Event

Overview

The purpose of a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event is to increase awareness of the resources to help parents, caregivers, and adult role models engage with their children/youths about the dangers of drinking and drug use. It may be many people’s first introduction to exploring effective ways to talk with young people about these issues.

A well-timed and organized event with compelling speakers is crucial to setting a proper tone and conveying the overarching message: that parents, caregivers, and adult role models have a significant influence on children’s decision to experiment with alcohol and other drugs.

Helping others learn about the resources and information provided by the “Talk. They Hear You.” campaign and how these materials can be used effectively will make them better equipped to engage in conversations with young people. Your educational event needs to be enthusiastic while also underscoring the serious consequences of underage drinking and drug use.

Convening Speakers & Determining an Agenda

Developing an informative and emotionally compelling agenda is central to creating a successful and memorable event. Once you have identified and confirmed your event



speakers, convene an introductory planning conference call with all of them to walk through the event process, goals, and speaking topics/roles. Detailed below is a template agenda that can be used as a guide to develop a successful event.

When thinking through the timing of speaker presentations, make sure that every speaker talks for no more than 20 minutes. Keeping presentations brief will keep the audience engaged. At the end of the event, be sure to allow time for questions and answers.

Setting an Event Date and Time

When choosing a date for your event, we recommend taking stock of your speakers and potential invitees' availability. We have found that a Wednesday or Thursday evening from 6:00–7:30 works well. Alternatively, a breakfast or “lunch and learn” could be considered.



Sample Event Agenda

“TALK. THEY HEAR YOU.”[®] EDUCATIONAL EVENT

MONTH, YEAR

6:00–7:30 P.M.

LOCATION

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE

Presented by [NAME]

AGENDA

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 6:00–6:15 p.m. | Registration, refreshments, mingling |
| 6:15–6:20 p.m. | Jane Doe, Event Host <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome |
| 6:20–6:40 p.m. | “Talk. They Hear You.” Campaign Representative
<i>What is “Talk. They Hear You.”?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces the campaign • Explains why the campaign was created by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, explains how campaign information and materials can be used, and shares a number of selected print, audio, and/or video PSAs |
| 6:40–7:00 p.m. | Charles Parent/Caregiver
<i>How I Have Used Campaign Information & Materials</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares personal insight into the various ways he/she has used campaign information and materials to engage in conversations with young people |
| 7:00–7:15 p.m. | Q&A Session |
| 7:15–7:20 p.m. | “Talk. They Hear You.” Campaign Representative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides closing remarks and thanks event host |
| 7:20–7:30 p.m. | Networking |

To learn more:

underageddrinking.samhsa.gov



Handouts for Attendees

Event attendees should be equipped to engage in conversations with their children after the event. In addition to pointing them to the “Talk. They Hear You.” website, the following materials can be provided:

- **GO TO THE WEBSITE AND PRINT OUT THE INFORMATION & MATERIALS THAT REFLECT THE CONTENT OF YOUR EVENT, AND PROVIDE THEM IN A PACKET TO YOUR GUESTS**
- Event attendee feedback form

Feedback Form

It is always helpful to obtain feedback from attendees to improve future events. Below is a sample feedback form to include in the event information packets. Be sure to remind attendees to take a moment before leaving to complete the form and leave it with the event host.



Event Feedback Form

Thank you for your attendance at the “Talk. They Hear You.”® educational event today! Please take a moment to complete this form and leave it with your event host. Your insight is valued and helpful to us. Please answer the questions with numbers by circling “5” for the highest rating and “1” for the lowest rating.

Were today’s presentations informative?

1 2 3 4 5

Were the presentations beneficial to you?

1 2 3 4 5

Did you receive the information you expected?

Yes _____ No _____ Explain _____

Was sufficient time provided for the presentations?

Yes _____ No _____ Explain _____

Was sufficient time provided for Q&A and networking?

Yes _____ No _____ Explain _____

Would you like to become more involved in the “Talk. They Hear You.” campaign?

Yes _____ No _____ How? _____

Would you like for us to contact you about upcoming “Talk. They Hear You.” activities?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have any additional suggestions?

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Mailing address: _____



Invitations & Crowd Building

How to Approach a Local Partner or Organization

It is time to start building a crowd and enthusiasm for your educational event!

There are templates in this section for the following resources to promote your event: a brief e-newsletter article, social media posts, an event flyer for distribution and posting, and an email invitation to help build event attendance. Share the resources with your networks and other relevant organizations to promote your event.

Outreach to supportive community partners and other organizations is essential to building an audience for your event. Remember that asking these groups to promote your event is a small request with a potentially large return!

Sample Organization/Partner Outreach Email Seeking Support:

Subject line: Need Your Help to Spread Word About Substance Misuse Prevention Event

Body of email:

Hello [NAME],

My name is [NAME], and I am involved with [NAME of YOUR ORG], which is a partner of the national “Talk. They Hear You.”® campaign, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The “Talk. They Hear You.” campaign is built on the premise that the first step toward preventing underage drinking and substance use is engaging in conversation with our young people. The campaign provides easy and actionable guidance and information for use in talking with kids about these dangers.

Because of your commitment to our nation’s youth and well-being, I ask that you inform your members and constituents about our upcoming educational event. We are seeking to spread the word to parents, caregivers, educators, and others about the excellent resources available through the campaign. Attached are an e-newsletter article and social media posts that can be tailored and shared with your networks.

Lastly, please contact me if you would like to engage in a collaborative effort to inform your audiences about the upcoming event and/or “Talk. They Hear You.” in general.

Thank you for your support of this important initiative, and I hope to see you at the event.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE, AFFILIATION]



Sample E-newsletter Article

This newsletter template can be tailored and provided to local organizations and individuals who may be willing to promote your event via their newsletters and other communications vehicles:

Learn How to Engage With Youths About the Dangers of Underage Drinking and Substance Use

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. In fact, over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether to drink alcohol. People in every state are affected, prompting teachers, parents, caregivers, and medical, health, and public safety professionals to work together to tackle this emergency.

We are excited to host an educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION] to discuss how parents and caregivers can start the conversation and engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use. During this event, supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Talk. They Hear You."® campaign, we will share information, materials, and personal stories aimed at providing easy and actionable guidance.

If you are interested in learning more about the event and to RSVP, please contact [EVENT CONTACT] at [EMAIL] or [PHONE NUMBER].

Social Media Engagement

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, can be a powerful tool for raising awareness about causes and events. We have put together sample content for you to customize and share online to let your communities know the educational event is taking place.

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 and 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.
- **Plan ahead.** You should plan your Facebook posts in advance, coordinating with your tweets and regular external communications.
- **Be frequent—but not too frequent.** Announce the event and post reminders and updates beforehand, including information such as confirmed speakers. Respond to questions and comments quickly. But don't post so often that you annoy others.



- **Highlight activities.** Consider promoting posts, starring stories, or pinning posts to highlight or emphasize your event.
- **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 Facebook Posts:

- Learn how to get in the habit of having small conversations about underage drinking and substance use with your children. Please join us at a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP at [link].
- Did you know that kids as young as 12 are trying marijuana? Learn how you can engage in conversations with your kids about the dangers of substance use and impaired driving. Come to a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP at [link].
- 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. Learn how to start the conversation at a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP at [link].
- The odds that children will use alcohol increases as they get older. Learn how to help your children make smart decisions by talking with them early about underage drinking. Please join us at a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP at [link].

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 OK if you tweet them within a few minutes of each other.
- **Leverage your relationships.**
 - **Retweet.** If you see a tweet that is relevant to your event, 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, the organization is notified that you have mentioned it. This helps build your relationships and get you 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.** Piggyback on Twitter’s trending topics if they relate to your event or underage drinking and drug 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**.
 - **Frequency.** Optimally, you should tweet several times per day, and tweets about your event should be a part of a larger dialogue. A tweet has a lifespan of about an hour, so be sure to space them out.
 - **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 managing the workload. Tweets can be written in advance, and a program such as **Hootsuite** can be used to schedule them to post automatically.

Sample Tweets (double-check that your final tweet is no more than 280 characters)

- Did you know that kids as young as 12 are trying marijuana? Come to a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP to the #TTHY event at [link].
- Get in the habit of having small conversations about #underageddrinking and #substanceuse with your children. Learn how at a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP to the #TTHY event at [link].
- Talking to children about #underageddrinking and #substanceuse directly & honestly makes them more likely to respect rules about alcohol & other drugs. Come to a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP to the #TTHY event at [link].
- Odds that children will use alcohol increase as they get older. Learn how to talk with kids about underage drinking at a “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP to the #TTHY event at [link].



Promotional Flyer

This promotional flyer can be adjusted, printed/emailed, and distributed in advance of your event. Try to distribute it far and wide to let as many people know about your event as possible.

Consider placing the flyer in schools, recreational centers, community centers, houses of worship, fitness clubs, grocery stores, and anywhere else you think is appropriate.

Suggested copy (for design)

Heading of Flyer:

You're Invited!

Body of Flyer:

Learn How to Talk About the Dangers of Underage Drinking & Substance Use

In partnership with the national "Talk. They Hear You."® campaign, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, [Name of Local Campaign] is excited to host an educational event. Learn how to start the conversation and engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and substance misuse.

Join us on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. RSVP by calling [NUMBER] or sending an email to [EMAIL ADDRESS].

Hope to see you there!

Email Invitation

Below is an email template to use for your educational event. We recommend sending the email invitation to your list of invitees at least 3 weeks prior to the event and then sending weekly follow-up invitations to those who have not responded.

[MONTH] [DATE], [YEAR]

Dear friends,

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. In fact, over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether to drink alcohol. People in every state are affected, prompting teachers, parents, caregivers, and medical, health, and public safety professionals to work together to tackle this emergency.

We are excited to host an educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION] to discuss how parents and caregivers can start the conversation and engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use. During this event, supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Talk. They Hear You."® campaign, we will share information, materials, and personal stories aimed at providing easy and actionable guidance.



I hope you will join me at this important event! Please RSVP by [DATE] to [email address] to confirm your attendance.

Sincerely,
[NAME]
[CONTACT INFORMATION]
[REPEAT EVENT INFORMATION WITH FULL ADDRESS]

Reaching Out to Local Media

Notifying Media About Your Event

Reaching out to local media outlets so they can report on your educational event is a great way to raise awareness within your community. We encourage you to offer reporters access to your event.

Don't worry if you haven't reached out to media before; the "Talk. They Hear You." communications team is always available to support you and answer any questions along the way. We have many additional resources and materials outside of what's outlined in this event planning toolkit to help you effectively communicate about the campaign.

Included below is a step-by-step guide on how to reach out to media, including templates for tools such as a pitch email and an event advisory. This email should go to media about a week before your event, with follow-up occurring by phone in the days leading up to your event.

After your event, adjust the template press release and send it to media members with relevant details. Including photos and quotes from speakers is a must. If possible, make an event spokesperson available for interviews.

Please keep in mind that media outlets that do not attend your event could still be interested in covering issues facing underage drinking and substance use. Establishing and fostering relationships with members of the media will be beneficial, and you can start by keeping local media outlets informed.

How to Contact a Local Reporter

1. Determine which reporter(s) to pitch.

Identify the outlet(s) that you want to reach, and then seek out the health reporter's contact information. If the outlet is small, it may not have a dedicated health reporter. In that case, you can reach out to the newsroom contact with your story idea. You'll also want to send an email to the calendar or daybook editor informing him/her of your event beforehand.



2. Prepare to send your pitch.

Equipped with your list of contacts (prepare a separate email for each contact), write a brief note as suggested below.

Email subject line:

Event for Parents/Caregivers: Talking with Kids about Drinking & Drug Use

Body of email:

Hello [Reporter 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. In fact, over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether to drink alcohol. People in every state are affected, prompting teachers, parents, caregivers, and medical, health, and public safety professionals to work together to tackle this emergency.

We are excited to host an educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION] to discuss how parents and caregivers can start the conversation and engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use. During this event, supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Talk. They Hear You."® campaign, we will share information, materials, and personal stories aimed at providing easy and actionable guidance.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact [NAME] at [EMAIL] or [PHONE NUMBER]. Thank you for your consideration.

[Email Signature]

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. Personalize the email as you see fit, especially if you know the reporter.

4. Call to follow up.

Follow-up is important. A mention of or story about your event is unlikely to materialize unless you call and make a compelling pitch, which includes offering an interview with a spokesperson/parent and offering suggestions for visuals. An effective follow-up call will stress why talking with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and substance use is important and interesting to readers/viewers/listeners.

5. Work with the reporter, and prepare your spokesperson.

Once you get the green light from a reporter, work with him/her to fully understand the angle that he/she wishes to pursue. As the media contact, you are the designated liaison between the reporter and any requested interview subjects—campaign spokesperson or parent/caregiver. It's your responsibility to alert the interview subject of the request and to help prepare him/her for the interview.



6. In the event you are pressed for time.

You can send a media advisory to a large list of reporters notifying them about the event. The following is a template event advisory that you can email. It is slightly less personal but still an excellent way of letting the media know about your event.

Sample Media Advisory to Alert Reporters of the Upcoming Event

EVENT FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS: TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT DRINKING AND SUBSTANCE USE

What: Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. In fact, over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether to drink alcohol. People in every state are affected, prompting teachers, parents, caregivers, and medical, health, and public safety professionals to work together to tackle this emergency.

Why: Parents and caregivers don't always know how to start the conversation and engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use. During this event, supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Talk. They Hear You."® campaign, attendees will be provided with information, materials, and personal stories aimed at providing easy and actionable guidance.

When:

[DATE]

[TIME]

Where:

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP]

Who:

Speakers include the following:

[NAME], [TITLE], [TOPIC SPEAKING ON]

[NAME], [TITLE], [TOPIC SPEAKING ON]

RSVP:

To RSVP or to learn more, contact [NAME] at [EMAIL] or [PHONE NUMBER].

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Sample News Release Summarizing the Outcome of the Event

A short, compelling news release is an effective way to share the success of your event after it happens. Sending a news release immediately after your event provides an opportunity to follow up with media outlets that did not attend. It also provides an opportunity to offer interviews and/or spokespeople as resources for future stories related to underage drinking and drug use. The following is a template news release.



Sample news release:

Contact:

[CONTACT NAME]

[CONTACT PHONE NUMBER]

[CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS]

[NAME OF COMMUNITY] MEMBERS GATHER TO LEARN TIPS FOR TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT DANGERS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING AND DRUG USE

The “Talk. They Hear You.”[®] campaign provides information and resources to get the conversation started.

[Local City, State] – [Date of Release] – Local parents, caregivers, educators, youth leaders, and concerned citizens met today at [LOCATION OF EVENT] in [CITY] to learn about the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s “Talk. They Hear You.”[®] campaign. This national initiative provides information and resources to help parents and caregivers get the conversation started in order to engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use.

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent or trusted caregiver. In fact, over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision about whether to drink alcohol. People in every state are affected, prompting teachers, parents, caregivers, and medical, health, and public safety professionals to work together to tackle this emergency.

The gathering brought together a cross section of citizens seeking to learn how to better engage with our community’s youths. They learned a number of startling facts, including that less than 8 percent of 12–13-year-olds say they have tried alcohol and less than 2 percent have tried marijuana but by ages 16–17, those proportions jump to almost half and nearly one-third, respectively.

“The bottom line is that by talking early and often with our children about the risks of underage drinking and drug use, we have a greater chance of influencing their positive decisions,” said [EVENT HOST/SPOKESPERSON]. “Meeting together as a community gave us a chance to share information, role-play, and learn about the campaign’s terrific resources.”

Visit the “Talk. They Hear You.” campaign’s website, at www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov, to find easy-to-use and actionable guidance, information, and resources needed to get the conversation started.

About SAMHSA

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA’s mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities.

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Final Preparations for Event

Pre-event Call with Speakers

In addition to the initial conference call held with speakers at the beginning of the event planning process, it is a good idea to host another speaker call a few days prior to the event. During this call, you can review the agenda, determine a speaking order, and answer any questions the speakers may have.

Email Reminders

Draft and send email reminders for confirmed attendees, speakers, and members of the media. This email should be sent a few days before the event, as well as on the morning of the event, as appropriate.

Sample RSVP confirmation email:

Subject line: [DATE] – Confirmed “Talk. They Hear You.”® Educational Event

Good [morning/afternoon],

We are excited to see you at the “Talk. They Hear You.”® campaign educational event on [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. Together, we will learn about the information and resources provided by the campaign to help parents and caregivers get the conversation started in order to engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use.

We look forward to having you. If you can no longer attend, please let us know at [PHONE NUMBER] or [EMAIL].

See you on [EVENT DAY],

[NAME]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]

Day-of-event Timeline

Create a day-of timeline for your event to keep you organized on the day of the event. The document can be as simple as a one-pager consisting of time stamps to ensure you know the timing for the following:

- Putting refreshments out;
- Testing the microphones and other AV/computer equipment;
- Speakers’ arrival;
- Displaying the informational materials;
- Guests’ arrival;
- Reporters’ arrival and who will greet them; and
- Sending the news release after the event.



Capturing the Event in Photos

Taking photos of your event is incredibly important in spreading the word about how parents and caregivers can start the conversation and engage with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use. The campaign welcomes photos of presenters, attendees, posters, and more. Caption photos with the name of your event, the names of people in the photos, and the date and location of the event.

By sharing your photos, your event becomes a part of our national awareness-raising effort. Don't forget to also share your photos on social media.

Post-Event To-Do List

Sample Thank-you Notes

Just because your event is over doesn't mean the work is done! Now is the time to follow up and capitalize on the momentum from your event to underscore the importance of talking with young people about the dangers of underage drinking and drug use.

It is important to send tailored thank-you notes to speakers and partners and a blanket thank-you email to attendees. Be sure to include the campaign's web address. These communications should be sent within 72 hours of the event. Also consider thank-you posts on social media that include event photos.

Sample Thank-You Notes (Speakers and Attendees)

To show your appreciation for those who participated in your event, don't forget to thank them. This is also a great opportunity to follow up and remind your attendees of the resources provided by the campaign.

Attendee Thank-You Note:

Dear [NAME],

Thank you so much for attending the "Talk. They Hear You."® educational event [last week]. We appreciate your interest and commitment to reaching out to our community's young people about staying healthy and safe.

Please continue to help us spread the word about the campaign and its resources. We encourage you to share your experience with your family, friends, and colleagues! Please remind them to check out the campaign website: www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov.

Thank You,

[NAME]



Speaker Thank-You Note:

Dear [NAME],

Thank you once again for participating as a speaker at the “Talk. They Hear You.”® educational event [last week]. By helping others learn about the informational and useful resources provided by the campaign, we are actively working toward keeping our community’s young people healthy and safe.

We welcome your efforts to continue sharing your experience with your family, friends, and colleagues. Please remind them to check out the campaign website: www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov.

Thank you,

[NAME]

Social Media Engagement

After your event, please don’t forget to share highlights with your friends and followers on social media. Below are a few sample Facebook posts and tweets you can tailor as appropriate.

Facebook Post

It was great to see so many of you at the “Talk. They Hear You.” educational event! Together, we learned how to talk with young people about the dangers of #underagedrinking and #substanceuse. We’d love to hear from you. Please send us your news and pictures. #TTHY

Sample Tweets

- Thanks for attending our #TTHY educational event! Together, we can learn how to engage with our kids to keep them healthy & safe from #underagedrinking & #substanceuse. [Photo from Event]
- Commitment, dedication, & passion for protecting our kids & keeping them healthy & safe from #underagedrinking & #substanceuse. Thanks for joining us! [Photo from Event]