



Student Assistance Resources Guide



#TalkTheyHearYou

Purpose

This guide serves as a tool for school administrators and student assistance teams to use the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) “Talk. They Hear You.”® campaign resources. It describes the campaign’s student assistance resources and provides tangible ways that school administrators and student assistance teams can implement the strategies. It also encourages school leaders and student assistance teams to increase awareness of student assistance services in their communities.

About the Campaign

The goal of SAMHSA’s “Talk. They Hear You.” campaign is to provide parents and caregivers with the resources they need to address the issue of alcohol and other drugs with children under the age of 21. Specifically, the campaign seeks to:

- Increase parents’ **awareness of the prevalence and risk** of underage drinking and substance use;
- Equip parents with the **knowledge, skills, and confidence** to prevent underage drinking and substance use; and
- Increase parents’ **actions to prevent underage drinking and substance use.**

SAMHSA has expanded the campaign’s substance use messaging beyond underage drinking prevention to include other substances such as marijuana and opioids. SAMHSA has also broadened its audience to include others, such as school leaders and educators, who influence the growth and development of youths under 21 years of age.



SAMHSA developed 5 Conversation Goals for parents and caregivers while talking with their kids about alcohol and other drugs. The goals encourage parents to:

1. Show they disapprove of underage drinking and substance use;
2. Show they care about their child’s health, wellness, and success;
3. Show they’re a good source of information about alcohol and other drugs;
4. Show they’re paying attention and they’ll discourage risky behaviors; and
5. Build their child’s skills and strategies for avoiding underage drinking and substance use.

Student Assistance Programs

In reality, almost every student will face some level of difficulty or be at risk for alcohol and substance use, bullying, violence, or mental health issues at least once during his or her academic career. As the most universal, natural setting for children and adolescents, schools are uniquely positioned to provide programs and services that promote student health and support students with assistance needs.

Research indicates that students’ social, emotional, and behavioral functioning directly affects their academic outcomes.^{1,2} Student assistance services promote positive social, emotional, and behavioral functioning through a variety of strategies, including (1) improving family–school connections,

¹ Mandell, D., Hill, S., Carter, L., & Brandon, R. (2002). *The Impact of Substance Use and Violence/Delinquency on Academic Achievement for Groups of Middle and High School Students in Washington*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.

² Fleming, C. B., Haggerty, K. P., Catalano, R. F., Harachi, T. W., Mazza, J. J., & Gruman, D. H. (2005). Do Social and Behavioral Characteristics Targeted by Preventive Interventions Predict Standardized Test Scores and Grades? *Journal of School Health, 75*, 342–349.

(2) offering skill-building to students in core competency areas such as problem-solving and positive coping, (3) building on behavioral self-management or self-control, (4) improving relationship skills, and (5) understanding responsible decision-making.

As part of a broad array of integrated prevention and early intervention services, student assistance programs help reduce risk factors for mental health and substance use challenges and have been shown to decrease:^{3,4}

- Disruptive behaviors that may interfere with learning;
- Dropout rates, school truancy, and poor attendance;
- Alcohol and drug use;
- Discipline referrals, with as few as 4 percent of students reporting alcohol and drug violations after participating in school assistance programs;
- Drinking and driving; and
- Other behavioral problems.

Student Assistance Team

When implementing student assistance services, schools frequently form a student assistance team. This team is usually multidisciplinary, comprising, but not limited to, interested and willing administrators, teachers, school counselors, nurses, social workers, and addiction and mental health counselors who will be responsible for making decisions on how to best serve students with mental health and substance use needs at their school. The student assistance team should meet regularly to review student assistance referrals and determine what program or services an individual student may need, as well as to monitor and assess the progress of students who are already receiving services.



Please consult the *Student Assistance Guide for School Administrators* for more information on student assistance programming. This resource provides the education system, and specifically student assistance professionals, with the guidance needed to create the infrastructure for more integrated prevention, intervention, and treatment services across the school system.

Student assistance teams are uniquely positioned to be a critical component of the success of the “Talk. They Hear You.”[®] campaign. Each team serves as a focal point to develop a complete picture of what’s going on with a student and assist the student and/or the student’s family members to engage both in- and out-of-school resources to address the concerns. A coordinated effort among parents, caregivers, and student assistance teams is critical to this effort, and increasing parents’ and caregivers’ understanding of the role of student assistance programs will facilitate earlier intervention when a student needs help.

³ Grunenfelder, D., Johnson, M., Maiké, M. M., & Schutte, K. (2012). *Washington’s Student Assistance Prevention-Intervention Services Program: Program Manual*. Retrieved from <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/preventionintervention/pubdocs/sapispmanual2012.pdf>.

⁴ Vermont Agency of Human Services, Vermont Department of Health, Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Problems. (2011). *Student Assistance Program Outcomes 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.asap-vt.org/documents/Legislative/SAP_SummaryAndOutcomesFY10.pdf.

Student Assistance Team Resources

The following “Talk. They Hear You.”® campaign resources are available for use by school administrators and student assistance teams to encourage conversations with parents, caregivers, and students about alcohol and other drugs, and increase awareness of the important role student assistance teams play in supporting students and providing assistance services when needed:

- “By Your Side” discussion starter video
- “Helping a Friend” public service announcement (PSA) (:30 and :60)
- Student Assistance Team Posters

See “More About the Student Assistance Team Resources” for a detailed description of each.

Suggested Ways To Use the Resources

These resources can be used in a variety of ways to engage with school staff members of all levels, parents and caregivers, and community partners, and educate them about the role of the student assistance team. Below are some suggestions on how you can use the resources.



Train-the-Trainer

Use these tools to reach school staff of all levels, as well as parents and caregivers, and empower them to further convey the information. Consider distributing a toolkit with materials such as the “By Your Side” discussion starter video, “Helping a Friend” PSAs, and Student Assistance Team Posters.



Community Meetings

Meetings with other community groups, such as health departments, school districts, and law enforcement agencies, are an ideal forum to share updates and resources such as the discussion starter video and posters. These partners can use the video and resources in their own prevention efforts.



PTA and Faculty Meetings

Show the discussion starter video at PTA and school faculty meetings, and make additional resources available to school staff, parents, and caregivers. Ensure the Student Assistance Posters are displayed in staff rooms and administrators’ offices.



Parent Orientation/Open House or Back-to-School Nights

Work with school administrators to secure a time slot during orientation or open house to talk about prevention efforts with parents and caregivers. Show the discussion starter video to demonstrate the role of the student assistance program and make toolkits available.

More About the Student Assistance Team Resources

Below is more detail on each of the student assistance–specific resources available through SAMHSA’s “Talk. They Hear You.”® campaign.

“By Your Side” Discussion Starter Video About School Student Assistance Services and Preventing Underage Drinking



This video pulls together characters from previously produced “Talk. They Hear You.” PSAs in a long-form depiction of the role the student assistance professional plays, and provides practical examples of when and how school professionals should engage the student assistance team. (NOTE: The previously produced PSAs do not need to be viewed prior to the discussion starter video.)

Video Summary

Ninth-grader Lily started the school year doing well academically, being involved in extracurricular activities, and spending time with close friends her own age, including Jasmine, the daughter of Rick. Recently, though, Lily’s behavior has been changing—she hangs out with juniors and seniors, friends of her older brother Kyle (a boy kicked off a team for drinking in a prior PSA); her grades are slipping; and she’s lost interest in extracurricular activities she once loved. A teacher, Jillian, who has noticed some of these changes, worries about Lily and shares her concerns with fellow teacher Rick. After talking, Rick suggests that Jillian meet with Rob, the school’s student assistance professional. In her meeting with Rob, Jillian learns more about the role of the student assistance professional as a focal point for developing a complete picture of what’s going on with a student and assisting the student and/or the student’s family members in engaging both in- and out-of-school resources to help address the concerns. Rob thanks Jillian for bringing Lily’s behavioral changes to his attention and explains that he has set up a meeting for later in the week to talk with Lily and her mom about what’s going on.

“Helping a Friend” (:60 and :30) PSA Videos About Parents’ and Caregivers’ Role in Student Assistance Services



The “Helping a Friend” PSA, another tool specific to the student assistance team’s role, can be useful in illustrating the collaborative network of support in action and the importance of engaging everyone who has touchpoints with a student who needs assistance.

This PSA is shorter than the discussion starter video and can be used for brief presentations, trainings, or meetings (with links to the discussion starter video and posters being provided as

supplementary materials).

PSA Summary

Rick and his daughter, Jasmine, are preparing dinner in their kitchen. A tone sounds on Rick’s phone and he glances at it, seeing an email from school. He lets Jasmine know that it’s a message to all parents about the incident that occurred at school that day. Viewers are not given additional details

about what happened, but it's clear that it was something bad and involved Derrick, a friend of Jasmine's. The email prompts Rick to talk with Jasmine about being aware of what's going on around her in school, including changes in other students' behaviors, and to tell a trusted adult—him or Jasmine's mom, a teacher, a coach, the school's student assistance professional, or someone else—about any concerns she may have. Rick points out that as much as he and other adults—as teachers and parents—try to stay aware, it's the kids who are often the first ones to notice potential problems. Sharing one's concerns is the very best way to help a friend who may need support.

Student Assistance Team Posters

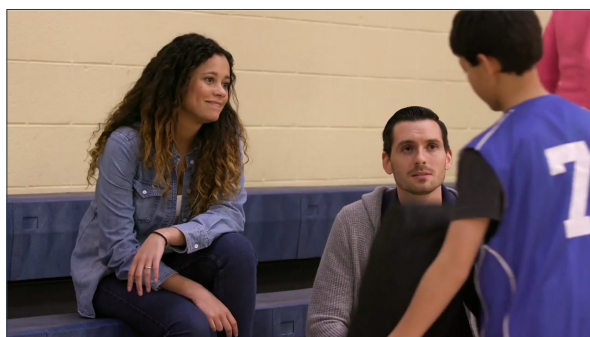
Three "Talk. They Hear You."® campaign posters target school administrators, student assistance professionals, and teachers to help them become aware of the role student assistance professionals play in student success.

Additional "Talk. They Hear You." Campaign Resources

In addition to the student assistance resources, the campaign offers a diverse suite of products on www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov. Consider distributing a supplementary toolkit with materials such as [fact sheets](#) for parents, [infographics](#), and [digital resources for partners](#).

Below are a few products that can be paired with the student assistance resources:

- [Discussion Starter Video](#):
A 4-minute video designed to be a resource for communities to engage parents and caregivers on the importance of talking with their children from an early age about the dangers associated with underage drinking. It highlights parent-to-parent conversations to help inspire parents to talk to their children about avoiding alcohol.
- [Discussion Starter Video Guide](#):
A practical guide to incorporating the Discussion Starter Video into a community event, parent-teacher night, or other parent or caregiver gatherings. This resource includes tips for presenting the video, such as when to pause it, and some suggested areas of discussion.
- [5 Conversation Goals](#):
A handout for parents and caregivers with tips to help them talk with their kids about alcohol and other drugs.

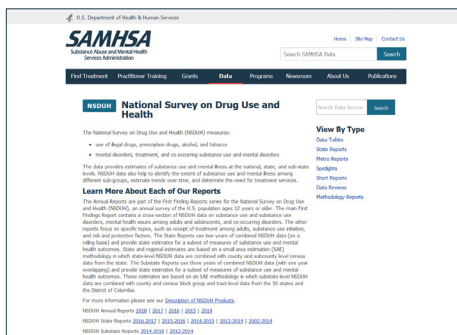


- [Mobile Application](#):
A mobile-friendly tool for parents and caregivers to help them practice having conversations about underage drinking with their kids. The app features an interactive simulation that helps parents and caregivers practice bringing up the topic of alcohol, learn the questions to ask, and get ideas for keeping the conversation going.

- **Soundtrack:** The “Talk. They Hear You.”® soundtrack features original songs from Eren Cannata, Richie Cannata, Chris Clark, Liberty DeVitto, Julio Fernandez, Tony Tino, and other musicians. This group of musicians has been inspired to create a soundtrack that amplifies the campaign’s powerful underage drinking and drug use prevention message. Use the soundtrack as an opening or closing anthem during your prevention-focused community event.



SAMHSA also produces resources on the prevalence of underage drinking, which may help localize the prevention message in your community.



- **National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH):** NSDUH is a nationwide study that provides up-to-date information on tobacco, alcohol, and drug use; mental health; and other health-related issues in the United States.



- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive (SAMHDA):** SAMHDA is a public resource funded by the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ), SAMHSA. CBHSQ promotes the access and use of the nation’s substance misuse and mental health research data through SAMHDA. SAMHDA provides public use data files, file documentation, and access to restricted-use data files to support a better understanding of this critical area of public health.



- **Monitoring the Future:** An annual survey of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders conducted by researchers at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, under a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, part of the National Institutes of Health. Each year, a total of approximately 50,000 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-grade students are surveyed (12th graders since 1975, and 8th and 10th graders since 1991). In addition, annual follow-up questionnaires are mailed to a sample of each graduating class for a number of years after their initial participation.

SAMHSA

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)

underagedrinking.samhsa.gov

#TalkTheyHearYou