

Substance Use Prevention Communications TOOLKIT



YOUTH 12-18

*Evidence-informed guidance for creating, delivering, & disseminating messages to **prevent onset of substance use in youth and build community support and readiness for substance use prevention in youth.***



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Acknowledgements

HIDTA Prevention Council Members

External Reviewers

Who else?

Introduction

We all have the opportunity to influence substance use in our nation. As parents, educators, healthcare providers, law enforcement officials, first responders, prevention professionals, and others who interface with youth, we are highly accessible to adolescents, young adults, and adults at risk for substance use and misuse. This means that **each and every one of us has the potential to engage in substance use prevention.**

Fortunately, one solution for substance use prevention is always with us - the words we use and the messages they convey. By ensuring our conversations and messaging align with best practices in prevention communications, we can together steer our communities toward greater health. And...**the time to embark upon this work has never been more urgent.**

The field of communications offers guidance that can be used by both individuals and organizations to more effectively communicate for substance use prevention. The general rule of thumb in communications is "**Be strategic, and do no harm**". The purpose of this **Substance Use Prevention Communications Toolkit** (the toolkit) is to prepare you to apply these principles for youth ages 12-18. It will guide you to effective strategies that align with your communication goals, provide considerations for how to most effectively develop and share your message, and offer caution against commonly used strategies that do not work or could even be harmful.

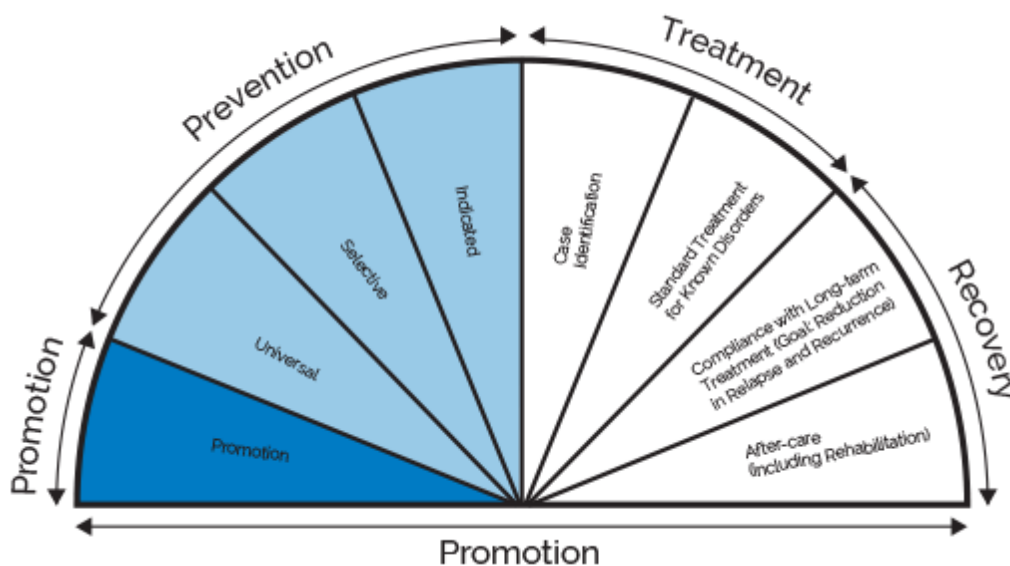
You will notice that communication strategies look different depending on the goal (such as to raise awareness, evoke short term behavior change, or aspire toward long-term behavior change). **Understanding the nuances of substance use prevention communication will help you develop the most effective strategy and generate the most impactful messages to achieve your goals.**

This toolkit synthesizes the best available evidence from the emerging science of substance use prevention communications to provide you strategies shown to work when having conversations with youth ages 12-18 and changing community mindsets toward substance use prevention. Best practice guidance from the broader field of health communications has been leveraged to address limitations or gaps in the existing science specific to communicating for substance use prevention. Evidence from these sources has been appraised by content experts and translated into this **useable guide to support you in applying the best available communications science for substance use prevention.**

A Focus on Upstream Prevention

Prevention communication strategies can be deployed across the continuum of substance risk, from nonuse to harmful use to overdose prevention. The selection of communication strategies will differ across that continuum as messaging content and approach are tailored to match the needs of the target audience. **The communication strategies in the toolkit are intended for youth ages 12-18 with the goal of preventing or delaying the onset of substance use.**

Prevention communications will be most effective when implemented as part of a larger prevention strategy. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) offers a framework to support communities in thinking through a comprehensive prevention approach that targets varying levels of substance use risk.



Understanding the full spectrum of prevention and levels of risk for experiencing substance use and its related consequences can help to address the range of needs within a community to prevent or delay initiation of substance use, reduce substance use, and prevent negative consequences of substance use. The four areas identified in the framework are: *promotion*, *prevention*, *treatment*, and *maintenance/recovery*. Each area can be further broken down, with prevention being broken down into *universal*, *selective*, and *indicated*.

Promotion targets the general public and aims to enhance developmentally appropriate health and safety behaviors that lead to healthy, productive lives. Goals may be to acquire positive sense of well-being, to maintain healthy relationships, and to develop resilience. *Prevention* refers to strategies and interventions intended to prevent the occurrence of a problem disorder, or negative health and safety consequence.

A Focus on Upstream Prevention

Universal prevention strategies focus on an entire population (including healthy individuals) and aim to deter the onset of substance use; example strategies are community policies around substance use and substance use prevention programs in schools. *Selective* prevention strategies target individuals with higher than average risk for substance use. One example is the provision of brief motivational interventions for at-risk high school students. An *indicated* prevention strategy aims to identify individuals exhibiting problem behaviors and involve them in special programs to prevent worsening conditions or associated problems. An example would be support services for young adults who violate school drug policies. *Treatment* targets individuals who have experienced problems or been diagnosed with a disorder, with strategies often including evidence-based therapy and pharmacotherapy. *Maintenance* and *recovery* target individuals who have completed, or are actively in, treatment with the goal of improving health and wellness and achieving full potential. Example strategies are peer support groups and vocational rehabilitation programs.

Prevention communications will have the greatest impact when they fit within a larger context of preventive interventions targeting a community's families, schools, and/or neighborhoods.



Building Community Support & Readiness

Applying Social Norms





How to Use This Toolkit

General Communications Guidance

Insert Frames here

1. Youth frames (3 pages)
2. Building Community Support Frames (2 pages)
3. What to Avoid (2 pages)



Implementation Considerations



PLAYBOOK: Caregiver/Educator



Scenarios	
Frame	Examples
Social Norm + Solution	
Aspiration Norm	
Agency	
Future Orientation	
Risks of Addiction	
Relationships	



PLAYBOOK: Public Safety

Scenarios	
Frame	Examples
Social Norm + Solution	
Aspiration Norm	
Agency	
Future Orientation	
Risks of Addiction	
Relationships	



PLAYBOOK: Healthcare Provider

Scenarios	
Frame	Examples
Social Norm + Solution	
Aspiration Norm	
Agency	
Future Orientation	
Risks of Addiction	
Relationships	

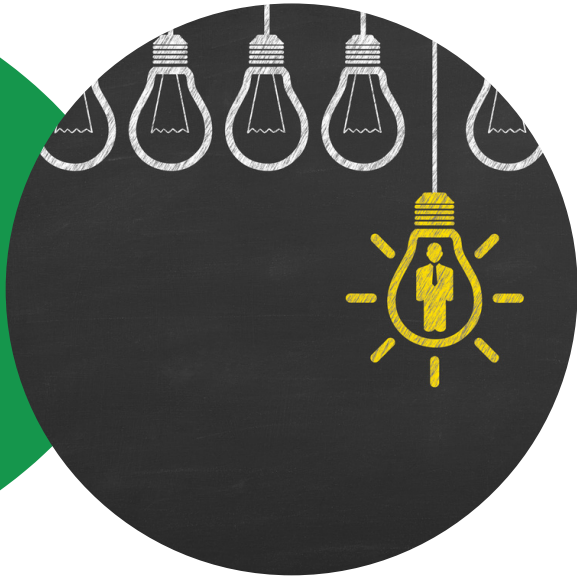


PLAYBOOK: Prevention Professional/Coalition

Scenarios	
Frame	Examples
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Evaluation





Resources

References