

Social Norms Survey Summary Report for Collaborators

Social Norms Media Campaign for Substance Use Prevention in [Name of School]

The social norms media campaign is an evidence-based communications intervention for substance use prevention. The vast majority of American youth – including the students at [Name of School] – are choosing not to use any substances. Yet both youth and adults overwhelmingly overestimate the number of 11–18-year-olds who use substances. People tend to believe that substance use and tolerance of substance use are more common than they actually are (e.g., “everyone drinks”, “most parents let their kids drink”, “most peers pressure their friends to use substances”). In reality, the most common attitudes and behaviors among youth (and their parents) are typically positive, healthy, and protective.

Perceived norms (i.e., what individuals *think* their peers and peer’s families do and believe) often do not align with actual peer and parental norms (i.e., what most peers and their parents *actually* think and do). These misperceptions influence how people behave. When people think substance use is the norm, they are more likely to make choices that align with that misperception (i.e., initiation of use, increased use, acceptance, or promotion of use). This misalignment between perceptions and reality makes individuals more likely to hide or diminish their own healthy and protective choices, attitudes, and behaviors. The presence of misperceived norms and their influence on substance use behavior has been replicated across the nation, age levels, and subpopulations of youth. The social norms approach applied to substance use prevention evolved out of this research.

A social norms media campaign was held at [Name of School] during the [Year] academic year. The goals of the campaign were to: 1) Reduce the misperceptions of peer substance use; 2) Increase engagement in protective behaviors (such as healthy coping strategies); and 3) Reduce substance use.

In [Month Year], students were administered a baseline social norms survey assessing their attitudes and behaviors related to substance use as well as engagement in healthy activities. Over XXX students completed the survey. The data showed that students are employing healthy coping strategies. For example, X out of X [Name of School] students relax or take a break when feeling down or stressed. **Overwhelmingly, students report disapproval of their peers drinking (XX%) and the majority (XX%) never drink alcohol. Despite the norm being non-use of alcohol, XX% of students mistakenly think that the peer norm is to drink alcohol.**

Students who misperceive the norm are at an increased risk for personally engaging in substance use. The social norms media campaign was designed to decrease this misperception by highlighting the true, positive norms based off the real data collected within the school, such as “XX% of students at [Name of School] never drink alcohol and XX% agree that if a student their age was being pressured by other students to drink alcohol, they should try to help that student get out of the situation.”

The social norms media campaign at [Name of School] [will run/ran] from [Month Year] to [Month Year]. The true positive norms of the students [will be/were] disseminated broadly

using a variety of media channels, including [List of Media such as posters and morning announcements].

[If presenting evaluation results to demonstrate the impact of the campaign, include the following]

In [Month Year], the social norms survey was re-administered to determine campaign impact. Over XXX students completed this follow-up survey. Results of the evaluation found several significant effects:

- Misperceptions of peer norms about using alcohol reduced by more than one-third (X%).
- Rates of alcohol use dropped X%.
- Alcohol use was lowest among students with high exposure to campaign messages.

The social norms media campaign at [Name of School] met its goals of correcting misperceptions about peer alcohol use and decreasing rates of drinking by highlighting the true, positive norms that already existed within the school.