talk

they hear you®

2019

ANNUAL REPORT

National Media Campaign for the Prevention of Underage Drinking

Talk. They Hear You.® Campaign Highlights

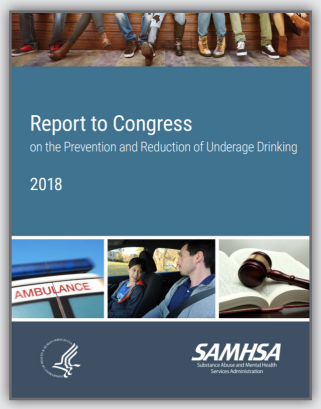
June 2019

SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA Acts To Prevent Underage Drinking

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) seeks to promote positive mental health and prevent substance misuse and health disorders. SAMHSA has long worked to reduce the impact of these issues on America's communities.



Nearly $24.3 billion (about 10 percent) of the total $249 billion economic cost of excessive alcohol consumption is related to underage drinking, much of that due to premature mortality of underage youth.[1] Alcohol continues to be the most widely used substance among America's youth, with a higher proportion drinking alcohol than using tobacco, marijuana, or other drugs.[2] By age 20, almost one-third of young people report binge drinking at least once in the past month, and 10 percent report binge drinking five or more times in a month.[3]

Alcohol use is also associated with a greater likelihood of using other substances, including marijuana, tobacco, and other drugs.[4] Hospitalizations of 18- to 24-year-olds for overdoses involving a combination of opioids and alcohol tripled between 1998 and 2014.[5]

In response, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention—through the Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act (STOP Act)—created the parent-focused Underage Drinking Prevention National Media Campaign.

United States of America
talk
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Talk. They Hear You.®
service mark certificate

The campaign, ***Talk. They Hear You.®***, aims to:

1. Increase parents' *awareness of the prevalence and risk* of underage drinking and other substance use;
2. Equip parents with the *knowledge, skills, and confidence* to prevent underage drinking and other substance use; and
3. Increase parents' *actions* to prevent underage drinking and other substance use.

The original goal of ***Talk. They Hear You.®*** was to provide parents and caregivers with resources to address the issue of alcohol with their children. However, in 2017 the trademarked campaign received separate funding to expand content to include information on alcohol and other substances.

Historically, ***Talk. They Hear You.®*** has focused on parents and caregivers of children ages 9 to 15 for early intervention. In 2018, the campaign expanded this age range to the age of 20.

The ***Talk. They Hear You.®*** campaign is congressionally mandated and is evaluated, and reported annually in the *Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking*. The campaign is currently in its sixth year and has evolved into an ongoing communications initiative and also a well-recognized brand.

What the Research Suggests

Alcohol continues to be the most widely misused substance among our nation's young people. SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that a higher percentage of youth (22.8 percent) ages 12 to 20 used alcohol in the past month than used tobacco (7 percent) or illicit drugs (9.4 percent).[3] Underage alcohol consumption increased with age in a steady progression from 1.2 percent for 12-year-olds to 53.3 percent for 20-year-olds.[6]

Parents have a significant influence on young people's decisions about alcohol consumption.[7] When parents know about underage alcohol use, they can protect their children from many of the high-risk behaviors associated with it. Further, parents who do not discourage underage drinking may have an indirect influence on young people's alcohol use.[8]

SAMHSA's *Talk. They Hear You.®* campaign addresses alcohol and other substance use issues by drawing from social marketing and health education behavior theories and from the latest scientific research and feedback from audiences across the country.

Piloting *Talk. They Hear You.®* Across the Country

In early to mid-2012, SAMHSA developed a national pilot program to test and refine campaign creative materials and pretest the campaign's national objectives in communities across the country. Five pilot sites, one from each of The National Prevention Network's Five Regions, implemented and evaluated the campaign. The sites were People Reaching Out, Metropolitan Drug Commission, Asian Health Coalition, Summit Prevention Alliance, and Erie County Council. The feedback received from market testing was incorporated into the final materials prior to launch.

Pilot sites were asked to:

- Use campaign messages and materials in current underage drinking awareness and education activities;
- Host at least one underage drinking awareness event;
- Include underage drinking research in existing educational materials;
- Provide overall feedback on the public service announcements (PSAs); and
- Gauge attitudes, behaviors, and concerns about underage drinking.

In 2017, SAMHSA launched its first forced-exposure case study evaluation at two U.S. middle schools. Parents and students at each school were surveyed about their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about underage drinking. Following the initial survey, one school received a 6-month intervention using *Talk. They Hear You.®* messaging and materials, while the other school served as a control site with no intervention. Both schools were surveyed again at the end of 6 months to determine if the campaign influenced their opinions. The case study enabled SAMHSA to estimate the overall impact of the campaign as well as inform future campaign materials development. There are plans to replicate the case study evaluation approach on a larger scale in the future.

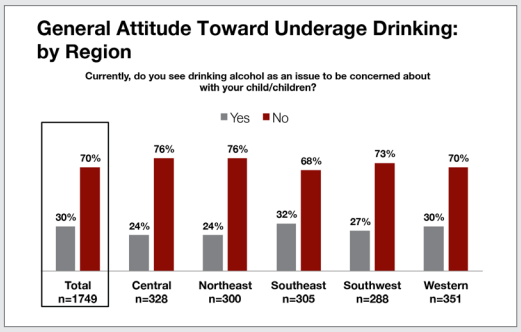
Note: The background activities in this section describe efforts conducted in the 2013 and 2014 fiscal years.

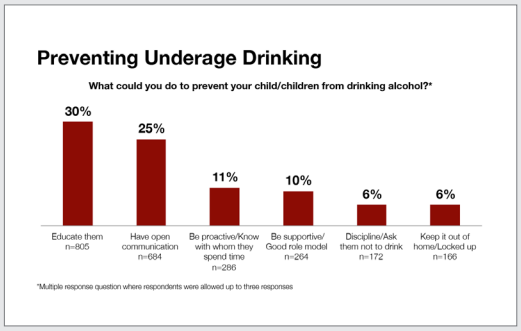
Pilot-Testing Campaign Effectiveness Before Launch

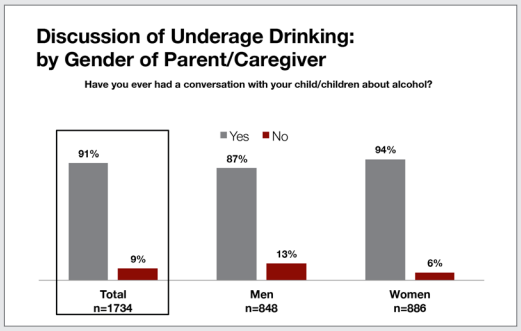
In addition to the pilot sites, SAMHSA administered a national web survey to establish baseline attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors linked to underage drinking. Through "control" and "stimulus" groups, SAMHSA assessed longitudinal changes in underage drinking prevention behaviors and attitudes over a 3-month period. A small sample provided qualitative feedback on the content, layout, and delivery of the PSAs.

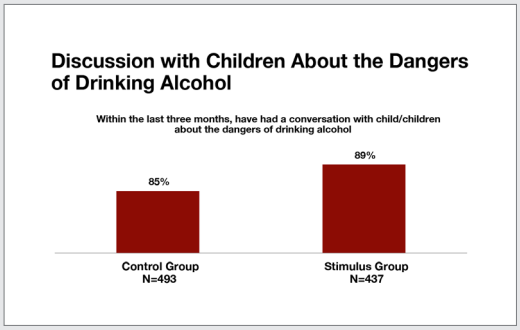
Measuring our success:

- Underage drinking is not a top-of-mind issue; less than half of all parents surveyed reported concern.
- Education and conversations with children were the top two ways parents said they could prevent underage drinking.
- Women are much more likely to have talked with their children about underage drinking.
- The majority of parents exposed to the materials said they were believable; a third said the materials left an impression on them.
- A quarter of parents exposed to the PSAs agreed the PSAs were among the best ads they had seen on underage drinking prevention.
- A quarter of parents exposed to the PSAs said they would seek out more information about SAMHSA.
- Parents exposed to the PSAs were much more likely to have talked with their children about the dangers of underage drinking in the last 3 months.
- Parents and caregivers asked for more modeling scenarios in the print PSAs.









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[4] Dupont, R.L., Han, B., Shea, C.L., & Madras, B.K. (2018). Drug use among youth: National survey data support a common liability of all drug use. *Preventive Medicine, 113*, 68–73.

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Empowering Parents To Prevent Underage Drinking

SAMHSA's *Talk. They Hear You.*® campaign engages parents and caregivers in the prevention of underage drinking and other substance use. Underage drinking and other substance use remain national public health issues, especially among adolescents.

Parents have significant influence on young people's decisions about using alcohol and other substances.

- Despite their prevalence, underage drinking and other substance use are not top-of-mind issues for parents.
- Children said that parents are the primary messengers for underage drinking and other substance use prevention.
- To succeed, parents need prompts and conversation starters for talking with their children.

Since 2017—amid the nation's opioid crisis and changes in laws regarding marijuana in a growing number of states across the country—*Talk. They Hear You.*® has expanded its content to include information on alcohol and other substances. Recognizing the dynamic national context, the campaign has been focused on preparing parents and caregivers to talk to their children about alcohol and other substances, including prescription pain medications, marijuana, and vaping.

The Year in Review

This year, SAMHSA began preparations to replicate last year's forced-exposure case study on a larger scale. The original case study evaluation found that *Talk. They Hear You.*® can have a measurable effect on parents and students in reducing underage drinking. The case study replication will take place in four U.S. middle schools and further explore how campaign exposure affects parents' and students' attitudes toward underage drinking. The case study replication is expected to launch in fall 2019.

TIMELINE

May 2013
- Launched *Talk. They Hear You.*®
- Launched campaign website
- Delivered campaign materials to partners
- Released inaugural PSAs

December 2013
- Produced new TV PSA, *Mom's Thoughts*

February 2014
- Released new TV PSA, *Mom's Thoughts*, during 2014 National Prevention Week

This year, *Talk. They Hear You.*® also launched three new PSAs and released a new suite of products focused on preventing alcohol and other drug use in children under the age of 21. In addition, SAMHSA began production of five new PSAs focused on both underage drinking and other substance use prevention. These PSAs will also be accompanied by a new suite of products.

To date, the *Talk. They Hear You.*® earned media campaign has garnered more than 9.43 billion impressions valued at $104.2 million, and has yielded more than a $9 to $1 return on investment for every dollar invested.

Collective promotion activities from June 18, 2018, through June 17, 2019 helped drive 52,837 visits to www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov.

PSA Concept Testing and Development

In 2019, three new *Talk. They Hear You.*® television and radio PSAs focused on preventing alcohol and other substance use were developed. SAMHSA also received funding to develop two additional PSAs and a discussion starter video.

To obtain feedback on PSA and video concepts, SAMHSA tested scripts for each product with technical experts from the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD). The ICCPUD Technical Experts Panel included substance use prevention professionals from the following agencies:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse
- The Department of Defense

Testing concepts with this panel of experts helped SAMHSA ensure that the final PSAs and discussion starter video resonated with their intended audiences. SAMHSA used the panel's feedback to refine the initial concepts and produce final PSAs titled *By Your Side, Choices, Clouded, Helping a Friend, The Incident*, and a discussion starter video also titled *By Your Side*.

May 2014
- Released *Talk. They Hear You.*® mobile app

March 2015
- Launched paid advertising campaign on social media
- National Partner Meeting

December 2015
- Launched #WeTalked social media campaign

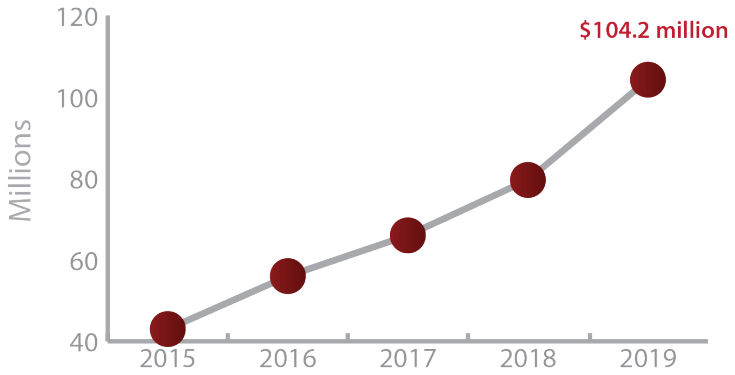
January 2016
- Conducted pilot survey with parents and caregivers of children ages 9 to 15

Reaching Parents Through Relevant Channels

Through June 30, 2019, the *Talk. They Hear You.*® PSAs have appeared in all 50 states and earned more than:

9.43
billion
impressions

$104.2 Million in Earned Donated Airtime



The PSAs have generated an advertising equivalency of more than $104.2 million across all media outlets

Since launching in 2013, the PSAs have been distributed to more than:

broadcast TV stations

cable TV stations

6,400

radio outlets

3,131

print outlets

By Your Side—Products for Educators

In 2019, *Talk. They Hear You.*® focused on expanding its resources for educators and school-based organizations. With additional funding, the campaign was able to develop a group of products all titled *By Your Side*, which focus on showing educators, school staff, and student assistance professionals how they can help prevent underage drinking and other substance use among their students. These products include a 9-minute video, which shows some of the signs educators should look out for if they believe a student is developing issues with alcohol or other drugs. This video was also abbreviated to produce 60- and 30-second television and radio PSAs.

March 2016

- Launched new Spanish-language campaign site, *Hable. Ellos Escuchan*
- Launched 30-day paid Facebook campaign to promote mobile app

April 2016

- Conducted outreach for Alcohol Awareness Month, including 10 new Hispanic/Latino partners

May 2016

- Released new Spanish-language TV PSA during 2016 National Prevention Week

In April 2019, SAMHSA produced its third original *Talk. They Hear You.*® Soundtrack to serve as original music in the discussion starter video and the PSAs. The Soundtrack features talented musicians and custom lyrics to encourage educators and other school professionals to play a role in underage drinking and other substance use prevention.

Online Conversations

Throughout the year, SAMHSA promoted the *Talk. They Hear You.*® campaign through strategic social media messaging on Facebook and Twitter. Monthly editorial content calendars were also developed and shared with SAMHSA's Office of Communications for integration into the agency's overall social media strategy. Content leveraged observances, such as Alcohol Awareness Month (April) and SAMHSA's National Prevention Week, to share relevant resources and messages with SAMHSA's followers. SAMHSA shared 74 *Talk. They Hear You.*® social media posts in the last year, which garnered 2,296 engagements (i.e., reactions, comments, shares, etc.)—a 19 percent increase in engagements from the year prior. Social media promotion also helped drive traffic to the campaign website.

Talk. They Hear You.® social media posts were retweeted and shared by government agencies and offices such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Office on Women's Health, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The campaign was also mentioned on social media by more than 50 local community organizations.

July 2016

- Launched the new Spanish-language TV PSA, *Hora de Cenar*

September 2016

- Conducted Media Evaluation Testing with CADCA in original locations where the pilot survey was conducted

October 2016

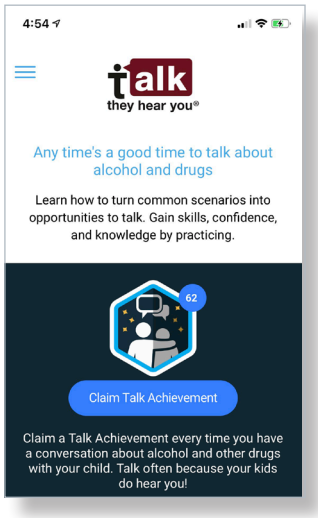
- Released the first-ever *Talk. They Hear You.*® Soundtrack on Amazon Music

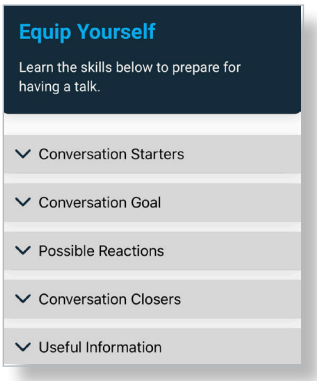
February 2017

- Officially launched the *Dads* PSA and Discussion Starter Video at SAMHSA's National Prevention Day

Building Skills With the *Talk. They Hear You.*® Mobile App

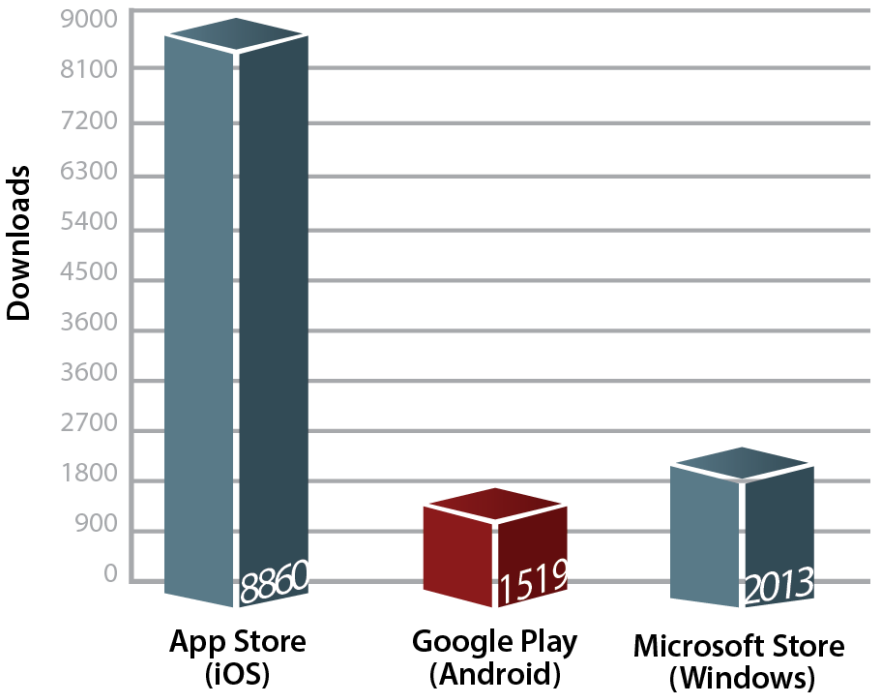
The *Talk. They Hear You.*® mobile app features an interactive simulation that uses avatars to help parents practice bringing up the topic of alcohol, learn the questions to ask, and get ideas for how to keep the conversation going. In 2018, the campaign started developing a new and improved mobile app to launch in 2019 or 2020.





Promoting the *Talk. They Hear You.*® Mobile App

The *Talk. They Hear You.*® mobile app garnered 1,237 downloads in the last year.



Total Number of Downloads

12,392

The mobile app is available through the App Store℠, Google Play™, and the Microsoft® Store.

May 2017
- Garnered 8,000 *Talk. They Hear You.*® Soundtrack plays during National Prevention Week

October 2017
- Launched Quasi-Experimental Case Study Evaluation

November 2017
- Hosted first *Talk. They Hear You.*® virtual stakeholder meeting

March 2018
- Garnered more than 7 billion impressions of the campaign PSAs

Broadening Campaign Reach Through Partners

Talk. They Hear You.® increased its total number of partners by 44 percent, engaging 177 new national and local organizations at events such as SAMHSA's 15th Annual Prevention Day. This outreach resulted in distribution of more than 2,700 campaign products, including postcards, fact sheets, folder inserts, table tents, and branded flash drives with the campaign's full suite of materials for parents and caregivers.

In the past year, SAMHSA continued to foster meaningful prevention partnerships with groups such as the American Automobile Association (AAA), Building Healthy Military Communities, and the Greendale Health Department (WI). For example, the Greendale Health Department expressed interest in implementing the *Talk. They Hear You.®* campaign to raise awareness about substance use prevention among parents and caregivers in its community. Greendale Health Department reached out to SAMHSA to get broadcast-quality versions of the campaign PSAs to run in its local movie house. With SAMHSA's help, Greendale Health Department reached more than 40,000 moviegoers with *Talk. They Hear You.®* messaging. Additionally, campaign messaging was developed and posted across the Department's social media channels and on its website.

Partnerships like this have helped the campaign earn more than 23,130 donated labor hours from local community organizations, which equates to approximately 12 full-time employees and $493,594 in estimated salary.

Community Engagement

Since 2017, SAMHSA has hosted *Talk. They Hear You.®* community engagement meetings to create a forum for community groups to share best practices for local underage drinking prevention. Meeting topics (e.g., underage drinking prevention in rural communities) are selected based on stakeholder input. Each meeting spotlights a local community group, such as a public health department, coalition, or school district, and showcases how its community is promoting parent-to-child prevention conversations. Here are some groups SAMHSA has spotlighted in past meetings:

April 2018
- Produced second official *Talk. They Hear You.®* Soundtrack

May 2018
- Produced three new *Talk. They Hear You.®* PSAs: one for military families, one for prevention of alcohol or other substance use, and one for opioid abuse prevention

July 2019
- Released *We Do Hear You* and *Reminiscing* television and radio PSAs

October 2019
- Released *Keeping Our Kids Safe* television and radio PSAs

- Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition (Easthampton, MA)
- Center for Prevention and Counseling (Newton, NJ)
- Manhasset Coalition Against Substance Abuse (Manhasset, NY)
- Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Arden Arcade (Sacramento, CA)
- Sacramento County Coalition for Youth (Sacramento, CA)

The most recent *Talk. They Hear You.*® community engagement meeting focused on how to work with media to promote the campaign in local communities. The meeting featured best practices from Marengo County Children's Council (AL) on placing PSAs, such as helping news outlets fill empty airtime with prepackaged prevention messages for parents and caregivers. The meeting also featured a brief background on news and how to place a precrafted campaign opinion editorial in local publications. Thirty-one of the 64 registered participants joined the meeting—an attendance rate of 48 percent, slightly higher than the industry standard for strong attendance (35 to 45 percent). Notable attendees included representatives from the Montana Department of Health and Human Services, Chesterfield County, and Somerset Public Health.

Continuing To Evolve

To prevent underage drinking and other substance use and empower parents to talk to their kids about these topics, *Talk. They Hear You.*® continues to grow. Upcoming activities include:

- Developing and launching a refined *Talk. They Hear You.*® mobile application.
- Creating new *Talk. They Hear You.*® products that resonate with campaign audiences.
- Evaluating the campaign to inform future approaches. This will include conducting a Parent Questionnaire, a replication of the 2018 Case Study, and an analysis of underage drinking and other substance use trends.
- Continuing to cultivate partnerships with national organizations such as AAA and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA).

November 2018
- Entered into co-sponsorship agreement with AAA

February 2019
- Shared *Talk. They Hear You.*® resources with potential new partners at SAMHSA's 15th Annual Prevention Day

April 2019
- Produced five new *Talk. They Hear You.*® PSAs, including one focused on vaping

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)
www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov

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