



Media Package

Reach Out Now



National Teach-In

Prevent Underage Alcohol Use



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

**START TALKING
BEFORE THEY
START DRINKING**
www.stopalcoholabuse.gov

Welcome to the *Reach Out Now* National Teach-In Initiative

Underage drinking is a serious public health issue in our country. Your organization, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and State and community leaders across the country recognize that fact. The U.S. Surgeon General has issued a call to every American to join in solving the underage drinking problem. Parents and other caregivers, educators, communities, governments—all sectors of society—are challenged to answer the call.¹

Your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In is part of a nationwide effort to get the prevention message out to parents, teachers, and others who influence young children and the decisions they make. It is never too soon to begin educating our children about alcohol use. Age 10 or 11 is not too young to start. A child’s decision not to drink creates health benefits that last a lifetime.

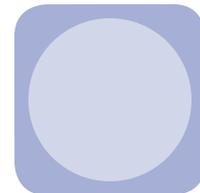
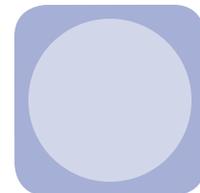
Now that you are coordinating a local Teach-In, you will want to publicize it. It is time to involve the media in spreading the *Reach Out Now* prevention message.

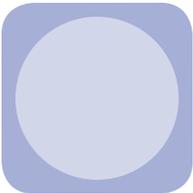
This package contains tools that can help you engage the media’s support:

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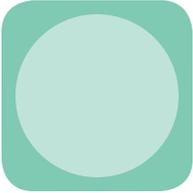
The information is presented in template format. The sample materials include blanks in which you can insert local information. Use the samples as guides as you develop your own materials. Feel free to either adapt them to include information about your particular community or use them as written.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2007. *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking* (electronic version). Retrieved from www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/.

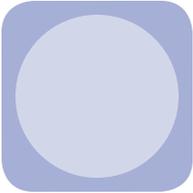




Using the Information in This Package

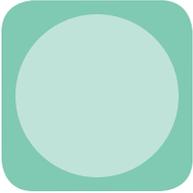


Involving the media, such as local newspapers and radio and television stations, is an excellent way to share information with large audiences. An important part of a media organization's mandate is to be of public service. Thus, the media should welcome an opportunity to address the problem of underage drinking. Your goal in reaching parents, caregivers, and others through the media should be to encourage awareness and conversations in families, schools, and communities about preventing underage drinking.

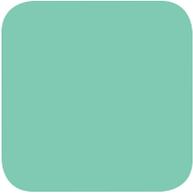


Expand or use a previously developed list of media contacts who cover stories about health, substance abuse, and education. Or put together your own list. Don't overlook community newspapers as potential outlets for raising awareness about your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In and its prevention message. In addition, local faith-based organizations and youth-related groups may publish their own newsletters and be eager to support your Teach-In objectives.

Media are more responsive to requests for space or airtime when they receive information about a local issue and receive it in a ready-to-use format and style. The samples will help you in preparing materials for the media.

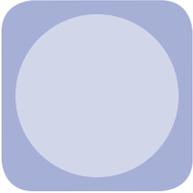


NOTE: In working with reporters, remember that they are frequently on deadline and may not return messages quickly. Be sensitive to their time constraints. Be patient but persistent. Your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In message is important to share with your community.



How To Use Key Points

The Key Points included in this packet provide statistics and other information that highlight the importance of the *Reach Out Now* National Teach-In message. When contacting the media to secure their coverage of your Teach-In, use this information to emphasize that underage drinking is a public health problem of interest to the media's audience. Work these Key Points into the materials you submit to the media for print or broadcast. Offer these points in advance to your guest speakers to include in their remarks. The points also are useful to the spokesperson from your organization who will be responding to media questions about your Teach-In.



The Key Points include facts about underage alcohol use. For a greater effect and to bring the message home add some statistics about underage drinking in your own community. The unit responsible for alcohol and drug services within your county's health department, or a substance abuse prevention group within your community should be able to provide this data. Using local statistics or a local news story about underage drinking will reinforce the message that fifth- and sixth-grade children in your community are not too young to learn about the harmful effects of underage alcohol use and how they can resist pressure to get involved in alcohol use.



How To Use a Media Advisory

A media advisory alerts the media to your upcoming *Reach Out Now* Teach-In, providing just enough information to encourage reporters to cover the event.



An advisory includes only the highlights of your event in outline form: who, what, where, when, why, contact information, and interview opportunities. When selecting a contact person, remember that this individual must be available to take calls in advance and on the day of the event. Include a short paragraph giving a minimum of helpful background

information. Lead off your media advisory, as well as other information you submit to media, with a short informative or catchy title to draw attention to your message. The intent is to get the reporter to cover your Teach-In event.

Send the advisory a week in advance of your Teach-In so reporters can schedule coverage.

How To Use a Pitch Letter

A personal approach can make all the difference in getting media coverage for your Teach-In. A pitch letter is an effective way to garner media coverage. More informal than a news release and more substantial than a media advisory, the pitch letter gives a reporter both a story idea and the information needed to get started. Your pitch letter should include a brief description of your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In and key facts underlining its importance to your community and to children's health. Include a contact name and telephone number to make it easy for the reporter to get more information.

Send pitch letters a week in advance of your event. Make a follow-up call the next day to be sure the reporter received your information and to encourage coverage.

How To Use a News Release

A news release, one to two pages in length, provides complete information the media can use to write an article on your event. The general format includes an introductory paragraph describing the who, what, when, where, and why of an event; in other words, all of the essential information. The next one or two paragraphs contain supporting information. Quotes by key local leaders or individuals involved in the Teach-In can make this information more lively and interesting. The final paragraph generally names the sponsoring organizations. When issuing your news release, use printed letterhead. Mark the end of each page with "more" and the end of each release with "-30-" or "####."

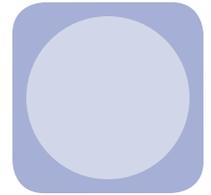
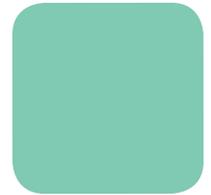
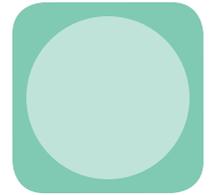
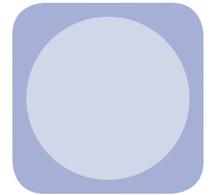
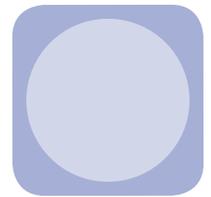
News releases are delivered to the media the day of your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In.

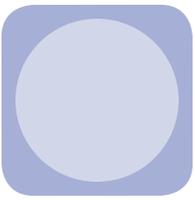
How To Use a Letter to the Editor or an Op-Ed Piece

Consider submitting a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece (an opinion editorial article) to increase public awareness about the dangers of underage drinking and to engage broader participation in your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In. Whenever possible, get a prominent community leader to sign the piece. Not only will this signature make it more likely that the piece will be used, it also will give greater "weight" to the message. Offer to provide a draft of the letter or op-ed to encourage the leader's involvement.

A **letter to the editor**, most often, is written in prompt response to published articles. You might, for example, write a letter to the editor in response to an article written about your Teach-In. Such a letter is an excellent opportunity to emphasize key points about alcohol use and the need for parents and other adults to talk with young children about alcohol. You also can write a letter to the editor about the harmful effects of underage drinking in response to any other articles related to the subject. For example, April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Any article related to this national observance can easily be linked to the *Reach Out Now* National Teach-In message.

An **op-ed** does not have to be written in response to a previously published story. An op-ed can be used to increase community awareness of the risks associated with underage drinking and to generate support for your Teach-In. Impress upon readers the seriousness of underage drinking by including several key points in your text. Describe why underage



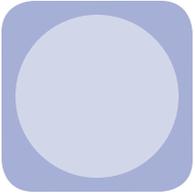


drinking is harmful, make reference to a recent local incident related to underage drinking (if possible), and explain how parents and others can help children avoid alcohol use. Include the author's name and title at the end of the piece. An e-mail address for contacting the author for additional information is optional.



How To Use a Proclamation

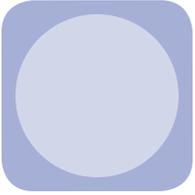
A proclamation is an official designation of an event, such as your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In event. It includes several key facts, beginning with the word "Whereas," to support the designation.



A proclamation is an effective tool for gaining public recognition of your Teach-In event because it carries the full support of a key government official in your State or community. Governors, county executives, mayors, State legislatures, municipalities, counties, cities, or towns can issue proclamations. Contact a member of the appropriate communications office to identify the steps you need to take to get a *Reach Out Now* Teach-In Week proclamation issued.



Be sure to publicize your proclamation. If the signing takes place at a news conference, distribute printed copies to reporters. Have the proclamation photo-enlarged to poster size for display at the news conference and, afterward, in a prominent public place. Send copies of your *Reach Out Now* Teach-In Week proclamation to local newspapers. As with any media piece, demonstrate its importance to the media's audience by including local statistics. If the Governor of your State will be issuing the *Reach Out Now* Teach-In Week proclamation, use State-level information. Information about alcohol and drug use and treatment at the State level is available from SAMHSA's Office of Applied Studies at www.oas.samhsa.gov/states.htm.



Key Points

In the United States, alcohol is the drug of choice among youth under the age of 21, used more than tobacco or illicit drugs. Even though adolescent use of alcohol has declined during the decade, in the United States, more than 10 million youth aged 12 to 20 are underage drinkers.

Alcohol use constitutes one of the principal public health issues for this population. Approximately 5,000 persons under 21 years of age lose their lives each year as a result of underage drinking. Early initiation of alcohol use is associated with increased risk of subsequent alcohol use disorders and increased risk of involvement in violent behaviors, suicide attempts, and other problematic activities.

The facts presented here are stated in general terms. Provided below is a list of the key Federal sources for accessing the latest data.

Access

- Adolescents generally obtain alcohol from adults who sell it to them, purchase it on their behalf, or allow them to attend or give parties where alcohol is served.
- About 3 out of 10 underage youth who drink in any given month pay for the drink.

Adolescent Development

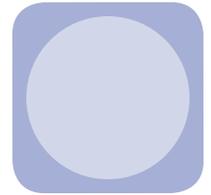
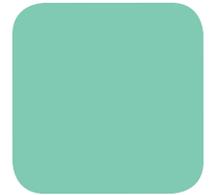
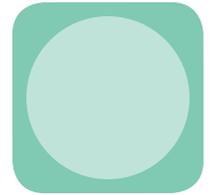
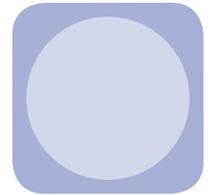
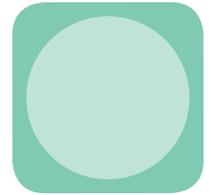
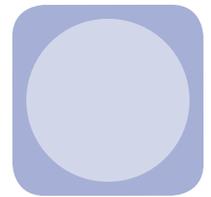
- Underage drinking can cause alterations in the structure and function of the developing brain. New research indicates that the developing adolescent brain may be particularly susceptible to long-term consequences from alcohol use.
- Some studies find that adolescents who drink heavily may experience adverse effects that disrupt normal growth and affect liver, bone, and endocrine development.

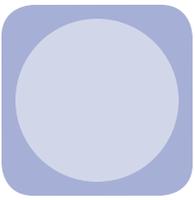
Age at First Use

- Youth who report drinking before the age of 15 are more likely than those who begin drinking later in life to have other substance abuse problems during adolescence and to be involved in car crashes, unintentional injuries, and physical fights after drinking, both during adolescence and in adulthood.
- Approximately 10 percent of 9- to 10-year-olds have started drinking. Nearly one-third of youth begin drinking before age 13.
- By age 15, approximately 50 percent of boys and girls have had a whole drink of alcohol. By age 21, approximately 90 percent have done so.

Binge and Heavy Drinking

- One in five 12- to 20-year-olds engages in binge alcohol use, meaning five or more drinks of alcohol on at least one occasion in the past month.
- A smaller proportion, about 6 percent, of persons aged 12 to 20 drink heavily, defined as 5 or more days of binge alcohol use in the past month.





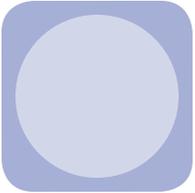
Location

- The majority of underage alcohol users report drinking in their home or someone else's.



Motor Vehicles

- In any given month, about 3 out of 10 9th- to 12th-grade students report riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.
- About 1 in 10 drives when drinking alcohol.



Risky Behaviors

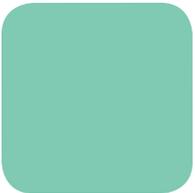
- Underage alcohol use is associated with academic failure, illicit drug use, tobacco use, and a range of physical consequences—from hangovers to deaths from alcohol poisoning.
- Youth aged 12 to 17 who report heavy alcohol use in any given month are the most likely to participate in delinquent behavior.



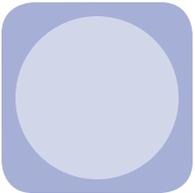
Sources of Current Statistics

The latest survey data may show changes in the general trends identified above. The most current information is available from the sites listed below. In addition to national data, the first two sites provide State and local information.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Office of Applied Studies provides the latest data on alcohol use, including findings from the annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health. (<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/>)

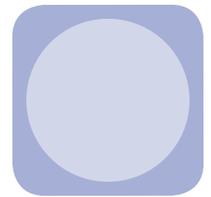


The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System monitors priority health-risk behaviors and the rates of obesity and asthma among youth and young adults. The system includes a national school-based survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and surveys sponsored by State, Territorial, Tribal, and local education and health agencies and governments. (<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>)



Monitoring the Future measures drug, alcohol, and cigarette use and related attitudes among 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students nationwide. The National Institute on Drug Abuse sponsors this annual survey. (<http://www.drugabuse.gov/DrugPages/MTF.html>)





Sample Media Advisory

For Immediate Release
[month/day/year]

Contact: [your organization]
[spokesperson]
_____ (day)
_____ (evening)
_____ (e-mail)



_____ *School Fifth Graders [or Sixth Graders] to Get Sobering Lesson in Alcohol Use*

_____ School in _____ [your community] will be holding a *Reach Out Now* Teach-In _____ [month/day/year] to educate fifth-grade [or sixth-grade] students, parents, and caregivers about the harmful effects of underage drinking. _____ [Teach-In leader/guest spokesperson] will lead the discussion about why and how young people can avoid alcohol use. _____ [your organization], in collaboration with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is sponsoring the event. In the United States, more than 10 million youth aged 12 to 20 have used alcohol illegally. _____ [local statistics or a one-sentence story to reinforce importance to the community.]

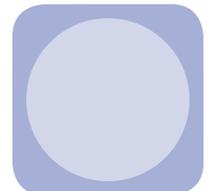


What: *Reach Out Now* National Teach-In event
When: [month/day/year] at _____ a.m./p.m.

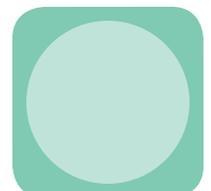


Where: _____ School

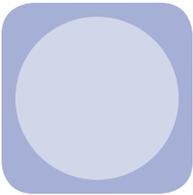
_____ [address]



Who: _____ [Teach-In leader/guest spokesperson]
_____ [title/position]
After the program, _____ [guest spokesperson],
Principal _____, and _____ [your organization's
representative] will be available for interviews.

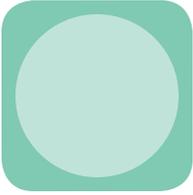


Sample Pitch Letter



[name of editor]

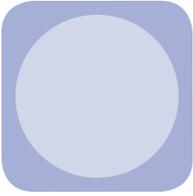
[title]



[name of news organization]

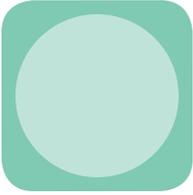
[address]

Dear _____ [name]:

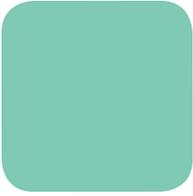


In the United States, more than 10 million youth aged 12 to 20 are underage drinkers.

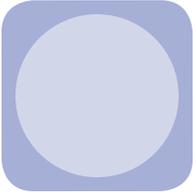
[local statistics or a one-sentence story to reinforce importance to the community.]



Fifth grade [or sixth grade] is not too soon to begin talking with children and youth about illegal alcohol use. On _____ [month/day/year] at _____ a.m./p.m., _____ [your organization] and _____ [guest spokesperson] will be sponsoring a *Reach Out Now* Teach-In for fifth-grade [or sixth-grade] students at _____ School in _____ [your community]. The *Reach Out Now* National Teach-In is a nationwide effort sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to make fifth and sixth graders, parents, caregivers, and other adults more aware of the harmful effects of underage drinking.



Please attend our *Reach Out Now* Teach-In. Children in our community need to know how to reject underage alcohol use and how potentially damaging underage drinking is to their health today and tomorrow.



Spokespeople will be available for interviews, either before or immediately after the event. I would be pleased to put you in touch with them.

Sincerely,



[your name]

[your title]

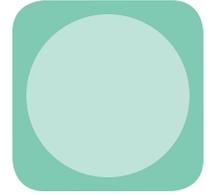
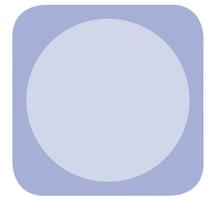
[your telephone number]

[your e-mail address]

Sample News Release

For Immediate Release
[month/day/year]

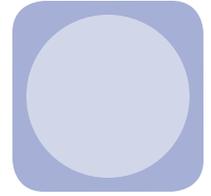
Contact: [your organization]
[spokesperson]
_____ (day)
_____ (evening)
_____ (e-mail)



_____ *School Fifth [or Sixth] Graders Get Sobering Lesson in Alcohol Use*

_____ [your community; date].

Fifth [or sixth] graders at _____ School in _____ [your community] learned about the dangers of underage alcohol use when _____ [Teach-In leader/guest spokesperson] visited their school to participate in a *Reach Out Now* Teach-In. The *Reach Out Now* National Teach-In is a nationwide program sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help prevent underage drinking.

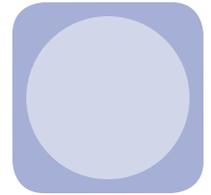


“Most fifth (or sixth) graders in our community are not using alcohol, but it is a decision many face,” said _____ [guest or your organization’s spokesperson]. “In the United States, more than 10 million youth aged 12 to 20 are underage drinkers. Far too many children are beginning to drink at a dangerously early age. This Reach Out Now Teach-In is an important step in helping our kids get a clear and consistent message at home and at school that underage drinking is dangerous, illegal, and unacceptable.”



_____ [local statistics or story to reinforce the message; e.g., number of underage drinkers involved in traffic crashes or other community events such as observance of Alcohol Awareness Month in April.]

SAMHSA reports that families exert a great deal of influence on whether a child uses alcohol. What parents may not realize is that children say their parents’ disapproval of underage drinking is the key reason they have chosen not to drink. SAMHSA also reports that children and teens are less likely to abuse alcohol if parents are involved in their children’s lives, make and enforce clear rules, and are positive role models.



_____ [your organization], in collaboration with SAMHSA, led the Teach-In.



###



Sample Op-Ed

Children and Alcohol: A Sobering Thought

Most fifth- and sixth-grade children in our community are not using alcohol, but it is a decision many face. How wisely they choose is up to us. In the United States, more than 10 million youth aged 12 to 20 are underage drinkers. [local statistics or a one-sentence story to reinforce importance to the community.] Children and teens in _____ [your community] need to know how to reject underage alcohol use and how potentially damaging underage drinking is to their health today and tomorrow. _____ [your organization] and _____ [guest spokesperson] have joined with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to raise public awareness about the dangers of underage drinking. As part of a nationwide effort, we will be holding a Reach Out Now Teach-In event for fifth[or sixth]-grade students at _____ School on _____ [month/day/year]. _____ [guest spokesperson] will lead the discussion about why young people should reject underage drinking and how they can resist peer pressure to use alcohol.

The discussion about the harmful effects of underage drinking cannot stop at the school door. Talk with your child about alcohol. A clear and consistent message at school and at home that underage alcohol use is dangerous and unacceptable will reinforce a child's ability to make healthy decisions. For more information about the subject, log onto www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov/teachin or call SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7.

The benefits from talking to your child about underage drinking can last a lifetime and make a lifetime last.

_____ [author] is _____ [title/organization]. For further information, contact the author at _____ [e-mail address].

Sample Proclamation

Office of the [Governor, Mayor, or County Executive],
[State, city, or county] of [State, city, or county]

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, there are more than 10 million underage drinkers between 12 and 20 years of age; and

WHEREAS, alcohol use among children and adolescents starts early and increases rapidly with age; and

WHEREAS, approximately 10 percent of 9- to 10-year-olds have started drinking, and nearly one-third of youth begin drinking before age 13; and

WHEREAS, underage alcohol use is more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined [local information]; and

WHEREAS, [local statistics]; and

HEREAS, family factors, such as parent-child relationships, discipline methods, communication, monitoring and supervision, and parental involvement, exert a significant influence on youth alcohol use; and

WHEREAS, family factors, such as parent-child relationships, discipline methods, communication, monitoring and supervision, and parental involvement, exert a significant influence on youth alcohol use; and

WHEREAS, children, with the care and support from family, friends, health professionals, teachers, clergy, and others, can avoid the negative effects of alcohol and drugs; and

WHEREAS, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and [your organization's name] invite all residents of [your city, county, or State] to participate in the Reach Out Now Teach-In;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [official's full name], [Governor, Mayor, or County Executive] of [jurisdiction], do hereby proclaim _____ [month/day/year] as

REACH OUT NOW TEACH-IN WEEK

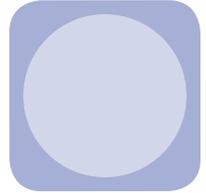
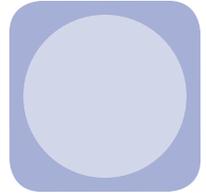
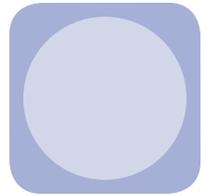
in [jurisdiction] and encourage parents, caregivers, and all residents of [State, city, or county] to prevent underage alcohol use by teaching children about the harmful effects of underage alcohol use and how they can resist pressure to get involved in the use of alcohol.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the [State, city, or county] of [State, city, or county], this [__]th day of [month, year].

SEAL

[Governor, Mayor, or County Executive]

Secretary of State



<http://www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov/teachin>

