



Community Briefing Prevention Toolkit: **Town Hall Meetings**



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





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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) by Macro International Inc. under contract number 270-03-0100 with SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Gwyndolyn Ensley, M.Ed., served as the Government Project Officer, with the assistance of Stephen Wing, M.S.W., Associate Administrator for Alcohol Policy, SAMHSA.

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This publication may be accessed electronically at <http://www.samhsa.gov>.

ORIGINATING OFFICE

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1 Choke Cherry Road, Rockville, MD 20857
HHS Publication No. (SMA) 10-4329
Printed 2008, Revised 2010



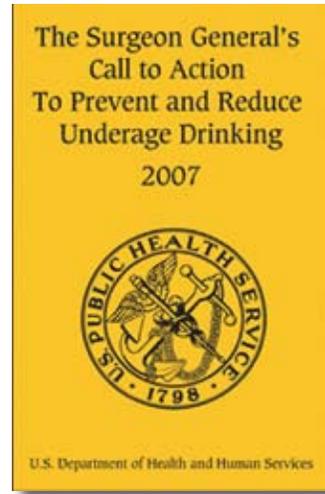


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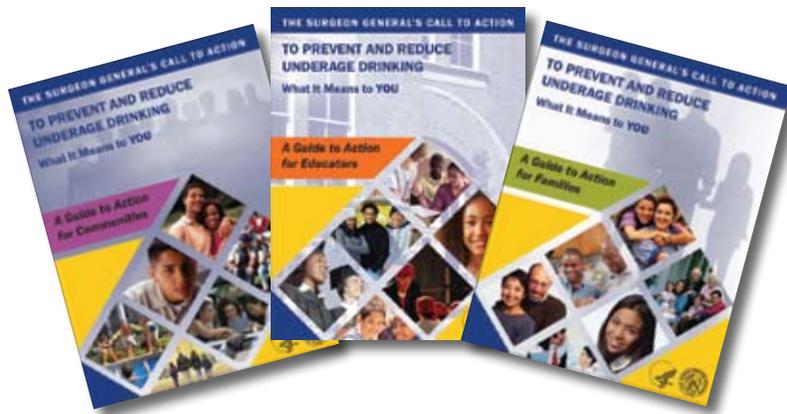
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The samples are presented in template format. They include blanks in which you can insert the most relevant local information. Use the samples as guides as you develop your own materials. You can either adapt them to include information about your own community or use them as written. Electronic versions of all text in this toolkit may be downloaded from <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>.





The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking



The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: What It Means to You—A Guide to Action for Communities

The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: What It Means to You—A Guide to Action for Educators*

The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: What It Means to You—A Guide to Action for Families

The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking and related materials can be accessed online at <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>. Printed copies can be ordered from SAMHSA's Health Information Network by calling 1-877-SAMHSA-7 or online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/shin>.





Introduction

Underage drinking is a leading public health problem in the United States. On an average day in 2006, 7,970 12 to 17 year olds drank alcohol for the first time. By comparison, 4,348 youth in that age group used an illicit drug, 4,082 smoked cigarettes, 3,577 used marijuana, and 2,517 used pain relievers nonmedically for the first time.¹

“Underage alcohol consumption in the United States is a widespread and persistent public health and safety problem that creates serious personal, social, and economic consequences for adolescents, their families, communities, and the Nation as a whole.”

—The Surgeon General’s Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, “...new, disturbing research...indicates that the developing adolescent brain may be particularly susceptible to long-term consequences from alcohol use.”² Furthermore, “early drinking and, especially, early heavy drinking are associated with increased risk for adverse lifetime alcohol-related consequences.”³

As part of a national effort to prevent underage drinking, the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD), which is chaired by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Administrator, is sponsoring a series of Town Hall Meetings (THMs) in communities across America. In many communities, the meetings will take place during the week of March 22–March 26, 2010, which coincides with the start of April’s Alcohol Awareness Month. Local circumstances may require meetings to be conducted at a different time.

The Town Hall Meetings will alert and empower the community as well as generate interest from the media. They will increase community understanding of underage drinking and its consequences and provide an opportunity for communities to discuss how they can best address the problem.

This toolkit is designed especially to help communities throughout the Nation plan their own underage drinking prevention THMs. The kit includes:

- Checklists and information for coordinating and promoting activities before and after the event.
- Facts about underage use of alcohol to insert in promotional and presentation materials.
- A slide presentation and talking points.
- A facilitator’s guide for the person who will be moderating the meeting.
- Media samples such as a news release in template format for easy adaptation for local use.
- Access to SAMHSA and ICCPUD resources supporting underage alcohol use prevention.

These materials are also downloadable at <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>.





This toolkit reflects and supports the principles and goals of *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*, especially: "Underage alcohol use is not inevitable, and parents and society are not helpless to prevent it."⁴ The Surgeon General has called upon the Nation to "foster changes in American society that facilitate healthy adolescent development and that help prevent and reduce underage drinking."⁵





Underage Drinking Prevention: Town Hall Meetings

Thanks to new research, we know more now than ever about the risks associated with underage drinking. The Town Hall Meetings (THMs) are part of a national effort to increase the understanding of underage drinking and its consequences and to encourage individuals, families, and communities to address the problem. Building on the success of previous THMs, the 2010 series will encourage implementation of *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*.

The meetings will provide an opportunity for communities to learn more about the new research on the issue and to discuss how their community can best prevent underage alcohol use. These Town Hall Meetings are designed to alert and empower the community as well as generate interest from the media. The entire community will be educated about:

- The dangers of underage drinking.
- The impact of underage drinking on the community.
- The value of parents' discussing the issue with their children.
- How preventing underage drinking can reduce its negative outcomes, such as injuries and death from alcohol-related crashes.
- Other steps the community can take to reduce the demand for, the availability of, and access to alcohol by persons under the age of 21 years.

Who Can Participate?

Anyone can! Underage drinking is a critical health and safety issue, so involving representatives from the entire community is important. Be sure to include parents; youth; educators; substance abuse prevention specialists; elected officials; and representatives of nonprofit organizations, businesses, health organizations, justice/law enforcement, highway safety, alcohol control, and other State and local government agencies.

When Will the Meetings Be Held?

Communities are encouraged to host their Town Hall Meetings during the week of March 22–March 26, 2010, which coincides with the start of April's Alcohol Awareness Month. Holding the meetings at the same time across the country will create a national event that can draw local and national media attention to this critical issue. However, local circumstances may require some communities to schedule their meeting at a different time.

Who Is Sponsoring the Town Hall Meetings?

The Town Hall Meetings are being sponsored by the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking, which consists of the Administration for Children and Families, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Labor Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace Programs, Federal Trade Commission, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Office of the Assistant HHS Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Safe and Drug-





Free Schools, Office of the Surgeon General, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

To learn more, please visit <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov> or contact us at 240-747-4980 or info@stopalcoholabuse.net.

First Steps

First, you should decide what kind of Town Hall Meeting to have. This decision will depend on how large and complex an event you want to hold. The following are three examples to help you make that decision. Please note that these are just examples—the activities are interchangeable. You might want to include or omit certain activities mentioned here.

Sample Events

Simple event:

- Combine your meeting with a community event such as a PTA meeting.
- Include adults and/or youth.
- Hold the event in a school gymnasium or auditorium.
- Limit the event to an hour or an hour and a half.
- Prepare a media advisory or news release to encourage media coverage.
- Involve mayors and other public officials, police and health representatives, and faith-based organizations.

Intermediate event:

- Combine the meeting with another community event or make the meeting a separate event. The meeting can be held in a school gymnasium or in another location or facility such as a restaurant, local library, or alcohol and drug information resource center.
- Invite key community officials, such as mayors and law enforcement representatives.
- Use the media kit as a guide to help reach out to the media and encourage news coverage.
- Involve mayors and other public officials, police and health representatives, and faith-based organizations.

Complex event:

- Make the meeting a separate event, possibly in a hotel ballroom, school auditorium, local library meeting room, or alcohol and drug information resource center.
- Prepare printed and/or electronic flyers or mailings to reach out to the entire community.
- Use the media kit as a guide to help reach out to the media and encourage news coverage.
- Videotape the meeting.





- Begin brainstorming ways to spread the underage drinking prevention message, such as through public service announcements (PSAs). For downloadable PSAs and additional information about underage drinking, visit <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>. (Appendix B has samples of print PSAs for the Start Talking Before They Start Drinking campaign.)

Planning the Town Hall Meeting

Planning committee members play an important role in ensuring that the meeting runs smoothly. They will need to decide where and when the meeting is held, who will present, how many panel members will be invited, what the key points will be, and what type of media coverage will be most effective. (See Appendix C for a sample panelist invitation letter.)

Before the Town Hall Meeting

Be sure to stay on top of the various tasks well before the event. As you plan the event, consider the items in the checklist below. Each of these steps will help you keep the focus of the Town Hall Meeting on preventing underage drinking.

Logistics:

- Find a rent-free office location to prepare mailings and make telephone calls.
- Select a date, time, and duration for the Town Hall Meeting.
- Decide how many people will be invited to the event.
- Reserve a rent-free hall with seating for the desired number of people. Keep in mind your location will determine the type of audience you will attract.
- Reserve an area for media members and determine whether they will have any equipment needs, such as risers or a milt box (a type of amplifier) for camera crews.
- Determine how to handle any necessary post-meeting cleanup.

Participants:

- Identify a list of invitees (parents; youth; educators; substance abuse prevention specialists; elected officials; and representatives of nonprofit organizations, businesses, health organizations, justice/law enforcement, highway safety, alcohol control, and other State and local government agencies).
- Choose a moderator to explain the purpose of the meeting; identify sponsors; introduce VIPs, speakers, and panel members; and serve as timekeeper.
- Identify and invite VIPs and people to serve on the panel.
- Determine the amount of time for each speaker's presentation.
- Contact VIPs, speakers, and sponsors to make sure they know the schedule and how long they may speak.





- Involve mayors and other public officials, police and health representatives, and faith-based organizations.
- Prepare handouts for meeting participants.
- Offer snacks or light refreshments.
- Plan follow-up meeting to discuss lessons learned and results.
- Organize a post-meeting reception.
- Identify and network with opinion leaders to further disseminate information.
- Discuss a possible community plan and how it might roll out.

Getting Started

Once you have decided on the kind of Town Hall Meeting you want to host, it's time to begin. First, identify and enlist a small group of people who are motivated to work—and who can make things happen—to be part of a planning committee. Forming partnerships with local organizations or businesses is an important way to increase the visibility of your Town Hall Meeting. The following are suggestions to help make your planning committee a success.

- Hold planning committee meetings at times and places convenient for everyone.
- Have an agenda for every meeting so you can focus on getting the work done.
- In each meeting, introduce the attendees and thank them for coming.
- Make sure all attendees sign in with telephone number, address, and email. Even if some people cannot attend the meetings, they can write letters or make telephone calls.
- Choose someone to take notes and keep track of the key points.
- Make sure every volunteer has a specific role and assigned tasks.
- Keep a record of everything you do.

The planning committee is responsible for making the Town Hall Meeting happen. Members will need to consider a number of factors in their planning process. Below is a checklist to help the committee plan the meeting:

Getting Started Checklist

- Define the purpose of the Town Hall Meeting.
- Choose one person to lead the meeting. Try to find someone knowledgeable about local problems with underage drinking. (See the Facilitator's Guide in Appendix A for tips to help you select a moderator.)
- Identify faith-based and community agencies and organizations to cosponsor the event. Define their responsibilities.
- Ask people in relevant agencies and organizations to serve on a planning committee.
- Identify people to help build momentum: legislators, parents, local leaders, and teachers.
- Put together the planning committee. Keep it to no more than 10 to 12 people. Make subcommittees for panelists and the moderator, if desired.
- Develop a program budget and a timeline for accomplishing all tasks.





Promotion:

- Plan and implement a marketing strategy.
- Prepare a news release (see sample in Appendix C).
- Send out a media advisory (see sample in Appendix C). Make follow-up calls to ensure that the event is on their calendars and that they will attend.

Materials:

- Prepare a sample pitch letter and letter of invitation (see samples in Appendix C).
- Decide how much of your budget to allocate for flyers, mailings, and other materials. (See Appendix D for a sample poster/flyer for providing details on the Town Hall Meeting.)
- Provide content to the moderator and prepare talking points for panel members. Use SAMHSA's Start Talking Before They Start Drinking materials on www.stopalcoholabuse.gov as a resource. The downloadable Start Talking Before They Start Drinking brochure also would be a useful handout for parents.
- Prepare a program handout, including an agenda, for the Town Hall Meeting.
- Prepare a fact sheet with statistics on underage drinking or a flyer to mail or hand out at the Town Hall Meeting. Use information available in Key Facts (p. 10) and on www.stopalcoholabuse.gov.
- Decide if there are other relevant materials that could be made available as handouts to participants. If so, order them in advance.
- Have registration sheets for attendees, speakers, and media.
- Have an agenda that includes the names of the VIPs and sponsors.
- Obtain signed releases if a photo, audiotape, videotape, or report is used.
- Consider showing a video or film clip on underage drinking to generate discussion.
- Review the talking points in Appendix E for the slide presentation available on <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>.
- Decide whether a report, summary, or other product will come out of the meeting.

Additional meeting details:

- Decide whether questions to or from the panel members will be allowed.
- Plan a follow-up meeting to discuss lessons learned and results.
- Determine if videotaping or audiotaping will be done and how these methods will be used to extend the reach of the event.
- Decide on snacks and light refreshments.
- Organize a post-meeting reception.

The Day of the Town Hall Meeting

- Arrive early to make sure the room is set up properly.
- Greet participants and show them to their seats.
- Steer media to the reserved section.
- Start on time and keep the panel moving.





After the Town Hall Meeting

- Send out a news release describing the meeting and mentioning speakers and the number of attendees (see sample in Appendix C).
- Make sure to follow up with the media representatives who attended.
- Write thank-you letters to the VIPs.
- Develop and distribute a report on the meeting.
- Follow up with agencies and organizations and get their feedback.
- Follow up with long-term activities that provide a continued emphasis on preventing underage drinking in the community.
- Use available print, radio, television, and online PSAs to further the underage drinking prevention message.

Then, give yourself a pat on the back—you've made a contribution to the prevention of underage drinking!

Using the Media Samples in This Package

The traditional media, such as local newspapers and radio and television stations, are excellent channels for sharing 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 conversations in families, schools, and communities about preventing underage drinking.

Create or use a list of media contacts who cover stories about health, substance abuse, and education. Don't overlook community newspapers as potential outlets for raising awareness about your Town Hall Meeting and its message. In addition, local faith-based organizations and youth-related groups may publish their own newsletters and be eager to support your Town Hall Meeting objectives.

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 Town Hall Meeting is an important opportunity for the community to discuss the problem of underage drinking and to share ideas for preventing young people from using alcohol.

How To Use a Media Advisory

Media members are more responsive to requests for space or airtime when they receive information about a local issue in a ready-to-use format and style. A media advisory alerts the media to your upcoming Town Hall Meeting. It provides just enough information to encourage reporters to attend and 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 with helpful background information. Lead off your media advisory, as well as other information you submit to the media, with an informative and catchy title. The purpose is to draw attention to your message and get the reporter to cover your Town Hall Meeting. For television reporters, be sure to mention any great visuals they will be able to capture at the event.

Send the advisory a week in advance of your Town Hall Meeting so reporters can schedule coverage.

(A sample media advisory is located in Appendix C.)

How To Use a Pitch Letter

A personal approach can make all the difference in getting media coverage for your Town Hall Meeting. 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 information needed to get started. Your pitch letter should contain a brief description of your Town Hall Meeting 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 follow-up calls to be sure the reporters received your information and to encourage coverage.

(A sample pitch letter is located in Appendix C.)

How To Use a News Release

A news release, one to two pages in length, provides complete information the media can use to write a story on your event. The general format for a news release includes an introductory paragraph providing 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 Town Hall Meeting can make the release more lively and interesting. The final paragraph generally describes the sponsoring organizations. When issuing your news release, use printed letterhead. Mark the end of each page with "-more-" and the end of the final page with "-30-" or "###."

News releases are delivered personally or by fax or email to the media the day of your Town Hall Meeting.

(A sample news release is located in Appendix C.)





How To Use a PSA

PSAs are messages the media broadcasts or prints free of charge to serve the public good. Most media outlets have public service directors who handle requests for PSA placement.

The print PSAs in Appendix B are part of SAMHSA's Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Ad Council public service advertising campaign. Details about this campaign and its downloadable materials, which also include radio and TV PSAs and a community kit, can be found at <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>.

Key Facts

- Alcohol is the most widely used substance of abuse among America's youth. A higher percentage of youth in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades used alcohol in the month prior to being surveyed than used tobacco or marijuana, the illicit drug most commonly used by adolescents.⁶
- In 2008, about 10.1 million persons aged 12 to 20 (26.4 percent of this age group) reported drinking alcohol in the past month. Approximately 6.6 million were binge drinkers (1.5 percent among 12 or 13 year olds, 6.9 percent among 14 or 15 year olds, 17.2 percent among 16 or 17 year olds, 33.7 percent among persons aged 18 to 20), and 2.1 million (5.5 percent) were heavy drinkers.⁷
- Alcohol use among children and adolescents starts early and increases rapidly with age. In 2008, nearly 16 percent of 8th graders, almost 29 percent of 10th graders, and over 43 percent of 12th graders reported drinking an alcoholic beverage in the previous month. Heavy drinking is a problem at all three grade levels. Among eighth graders, about 1 in 20 (5.4 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the past month. Nearly 1 out of every 7 10th graders (14.4 percent) and about 2 out of every 7 12th graders (27.6 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the last month.⁸
- Early onset of drinking can be a marker for future problems, including alcohol dependence and other substance abuse. Those who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are five times more likely than those who start at age 21 and older to develop alcohol problems.⁹
- Each year, approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking. This figure includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes; 1,600 as a result of homicides; 300 from suicide; and hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings.¹⁰
- Underage alcohol use increases the risk of being involved in physical and sexual assault and can lead to risky sexual behavior. It also is associated with academic failure, illicit drug use, tobacco use, and a range of physical consequences—from hangovers to deaths from alcohol poisoning.¹¹
- Alcohol can cause alterations in the structure and function of the developing brain, which continues to mature into a person's twenties, and may have consequences reaching far beyond adolescence.¹¹





- Perceived parental disapproval is a powerful influence on youthful alcohol use. Children who believe their parents would strongly disapprove of their using a particular substance are less likely to do so than those whose parents somewhat disapprove or neither approve nor disapprove.¹²
- Parental involvement is another important factor. In 2008, past-month use of illicit drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol (including binge drinking) was lower among youth aged 12 to 17 who reported that their parents always or sometimes engaged in monitoring behaviors (for example, helping children with homework, limiting television and time out with friends on school nights, and requiring them to do chores) than among youth whose parents “seldom” or “never” engaged in such behaviors.⁷

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Appendix A: Facilitator's Guide







Facilitator's Guide

The facilitator of your Town Hall Meeting plays a critical role in the success of the event. This person must keep the meeting on track and encourage the flow of ideas and discussions among participants. Keep the following points in mind when selecting a facilitator for your Town Hall Meeting.

The Facilitator Should:

- Know the subject matter well (that is, be knowledgeable on the topic of underage alcohol use).
- Have strong communication skills, which include speaking and listening well.
- Be tactful, particularly when faced with controversial questions or disruptions.
- Decide when to move on to another point or topic and when to allow a discussion to continue.
- Engage the audience.
- Encourage audience participation.
- Keep the meeting focused on the agreed-upon subject.

Once you have identified the facilitator, explain the specific role he or she will play in the success of the Town Hall Meeting. Provide the following checklist to help the facilitator prepare for the meeting.

The Facilitator's Role:

- Introduce the problem of underage alcohol use and any specific related issues that will be discussed in the meeting.
- Explain the format (for example, will participants be encouraged to ask questions throughout panel discussions or will they be asked to hold questions and comments until the end?).
- Introduce panelists.
- Ask questions of the panelists that will reinforce the importance of preventing underage alcohol use (for example, ask a law enforcement representative about the legal implications of underage alcohol use).
- Determine the length of time allowed per panelist to answer each question.
- Have a preset timeframe for the panel discussion.
- Begin a question and answer (Q&A) period with the other participants, providing a microphone if needed.
- Have a preset timeframe for the Q&A period.
- During the Q&A period, take questions from the audience and direct them to the appropriate panelist.
- Wrap up the meeting by summarizing the key points discussed, identifying next steps, and thanking panelists and audience members for their participation.
- Facilitate interviews between the media and the panelists or other spokespersons. Some of these interviews may occur before the meeting.
- Have a preset timeframe for media interviews.

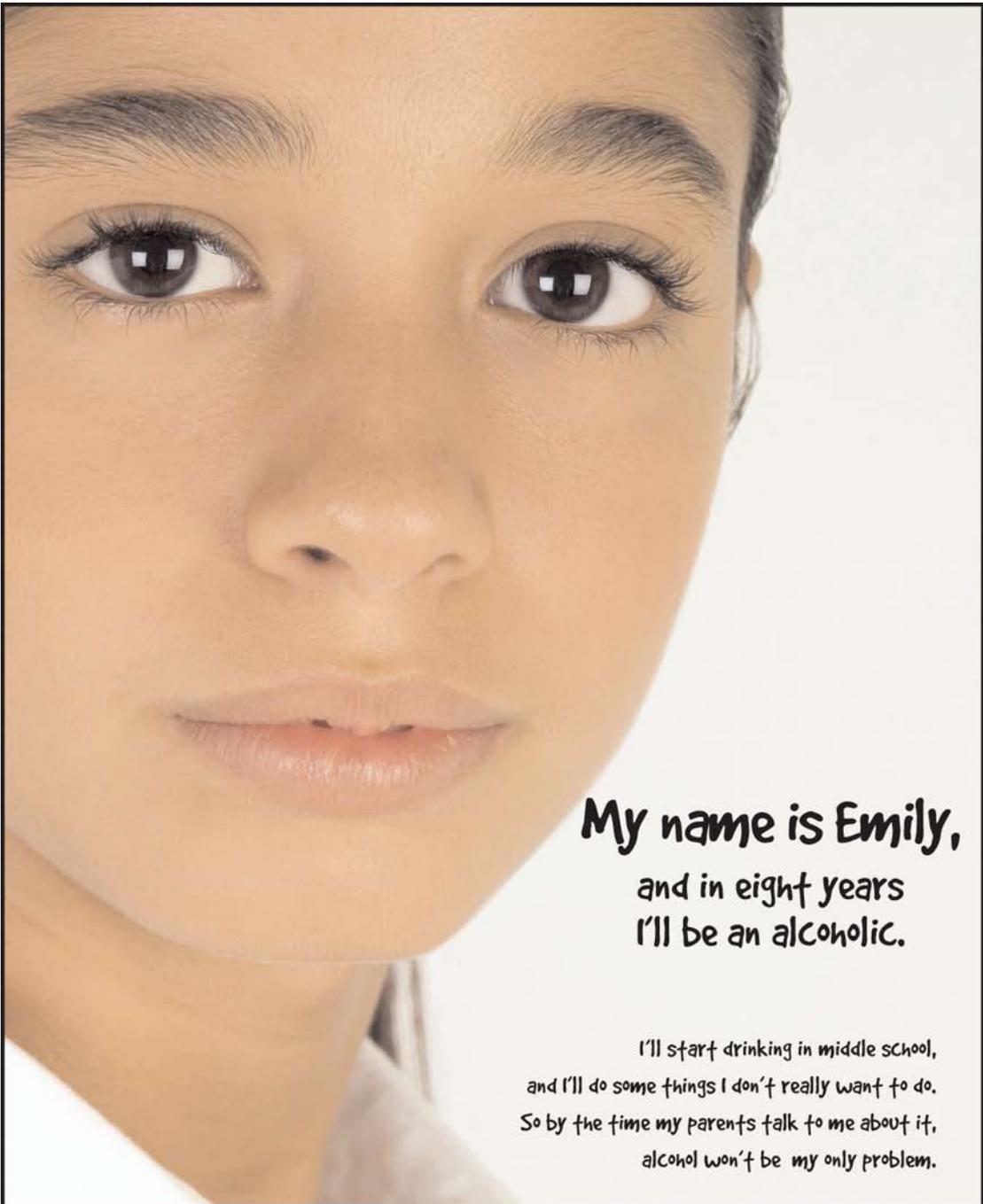






Appendix B: Start Talking Before They Start Drinking PSAs





My name is Emily,
and in eight years
I'll be an alcoholic.

I'll start drinking in middle school,
and I'll do some things I don't really want to do.
So by the time my parents talk to me about it,
alcohol won't be my only problem.

START TALKING BEFORE THEY START DRINKING.

Kids who drink before age 15 are 5 times more likely to have alcohol problems when they're adults. To learn more, go to www.stopalcoholabuse.gov or call 1.800.729.6686



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





My name is Peter,
and in eight years I'll be an alcoholic.

I'll start drinking in middle school,
and I'll do some things I don't really want to do.
So by the time my parents talk to me about it,
alcohol won't be my only problem.

START TALKING BEFORE THEY START DRINKING.

Kids who drink before age 15 are 5 times more likely to have alcohol problems when they're adults. To learn more, go to www.stopalcoholabuse.gov or call 1.800.729.6686



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Appendix C: Samples





Sample Panelist Invitation Letter

[Date]
[Name]
[Title]
[Organization]
[Address]
[City, State, ZIP]

Dear [Salutation] [Last name]:

Alcohol use among children and adolescents starts early and increases rapidly with age. In 2008, 15.9 percent of 8th graders, 28.8 percent of 10th graders, and 43.1 percent of 12th graders reported drinking an alcoholic beverage in the previous month. Heavy drinking is a problem at all three grade levels. Among eighth graders, about 1 in 20 (5.4 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the past month. Nearly 1 out of every 7 10th graders (14.4 percent) and about 2 out of every 7 12th graders (27.6 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the last month.¹

To help educate young people and caring adults about the risks associated with underage drinking, the Federal Government's Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking is supporting a series of Town Hall Meetings. The meetings will take place in communities across America during the week of March 22–March 26, which coincides with the start of April's Alcohol Awareness Month.

[Community] is planning a Town Hall Meeting in our area on [Date and time] at [Location]. This meeting will give us the opportunity to educate parents, teachers, officials, youth, and other community members about the impact of underage drinking and will allow us to develop possible solutions.

As an organization committed to preventing underage drinking, [Name of your organization] is inviting you to lend your expertise by being a presenter at our Town Hall Meeting on [Date]. We will provide you with talking points that you can use during the [Length of time] presentation. With participation from prominent local spokespersons, we hope to raise awareness of the risks of underage drinking and to encourage broader use of the many resources that are available to youth, parents, schools, and communities. Media will also be encouraged to cover this Town Hall Meeting.

I will follow up in a few days to inquire about whether you would be willing to serve on the panel or you may contact [Name of representative from your organization] at [Phone number] or via email at [Contact person's email address]. We hope you will join us in educating our community about the importance of preventing underage drinking.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2008. *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use—Overview of Key Findings. 2008* (electronic version). Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/overview2008.pdf>.





Sample Media Advisory

Underage Drinking Prevention: Town Hall Meetings

[Name of your organization]

For Immediate Release
[Date]

Contact: [Your organization]
[Spokesperson]
_____ (day)
_____ (evening)
_____ (email)

[Community] To Come Together for Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking

[Insert local statistic]

[Community name] in [City], [State], is one of hundreds of communities nationwide that will hold an Underage Drinking Prevention: Town Hall Meeting on [Date] to discuss and raise awareness about the issue of underage drinking. [Your organization], in collaboration with the Federal Government’s Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking, is sponsoring the event. Parents, teachers, officials, youth, and other community members will be educated about the impact that underage drinking has on the community, and they will develop possible ways to address this issue.

Among eighth graders, about 1 in 20 (5.4 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the past month. Nearly 1 out of every 7 10th graders (14.4 percent) and about 2 out of every 7 12th graders (27.6 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the last month.¹

[Insert any additional local statistics]

What: Underage Drinking Prevention: Town Hall Meeting
When: [Date] at [Time]
Where: [Address]
Who: [Spokesperson]
[Title]

After the meeting, [Guest spokesperson], [Community representative], and [Your organization’s representative] will be available for interviews.

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2008. *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use—Overview of Key Findings. 2008* (electronic version). Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/overview2008.pdf>.





Sample Pitch Letter

[Name of editor]
[Title]
[Name of news organization]
[Address]
[City, State, ZIP]

Dear [Name]:

Alcohol use among children and adolescents starts early and increases rapidly with age. In 2008, 15.9 percent of 8th graders, 28.8 percent of 10th graders, and 43.1 percent of 12th graders reported drinking an alcoholic beverage in the previous month. Heavy drinking is a problem at all three grade levels. Among eighth graders, about 1 in 20 (5.4 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the past month. Nearly 1 out of every 7 10th graders (14.4 percent) and about 2 out of every 7 12th graders (27.6 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the last month.¹

To help educate young people and caring adults about the risks associated with underage drinking, the Federal Government's Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD) is supporting a series of Town Hall Meetings. The meetings will take place in communities across America the week of March 22–March 26, 2010, which coincides with April's Alcohol Awareness Month. [Insert local statistics]

Among young people, the prevalence of underage drinking increases with age, making it more important than ever to begin teaching youth at an early age about the dangers of alcohol. On [Date] at [Time], [Your organization] and [Guest spokesperson] will be sponsoring an Underage Drinking Prevention: Town Hall Meeting at [Location] to raise awareness of the risks of underage drinking. The Town Hall Meeting is a national effort by ICCPUD to inform youth, parents, caregivers, and other adults about the harmful effects of underage drinking.

Please attend our Town Hall Meeting to help increase community awareness of the dangers of alcohol use by our youth. Children in our community need to know how to reject underage drinking and how damaging underage drinking can be to their health, now and in the future.

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

Sincerely,

[Your name]
[Your title]
[Your phone number]
[Your email address]

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2008. *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use—Overview of Key Findings, 2008* (electronic version). Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/overview2008.pdf>.





Sample News Release

For Immediate Release
[Date]

Contact: [Your organization]
[Spokesperson]
_____ (day)
_____ (evening)
_____ (email)

[Community] Comes Together for Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking

[Insert local statistics]

[Your community, date]

Today [Community name] in [City], [State], became one of hundreds of communities nationwide that held a Town Hall Meeting to alert the community to new research on the risks of underage drinking and empower the community to take action to stop it. The Federal Government’s Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD) is supporting Town Hall Meetings that are taking place in communities across America during the week of March 22–March 26, 2010, which coincides with the start of April’s Alcohol Awareness Month.

The Town Hall Meeting educated parents, teachers, officials, youth, and other community members about the impact underage drinking has on the community. Together, they discussed possible ways to address the issue.

Underage drinking is an important community concern. Among eighth graders, about 1 in 20 (5.4 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the past month. Nearly 1 out of every 7 10th graders (14.4 percent) and about 2 out of every 7 12th graders (27.6 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the last month.¹ [Insert local statistics or a story to reinforce the message (for example, the number of underage drinkers involved in traffic crashes or other community events tied to Alcohol Awareness Month).]

Research indicates that families exert a great deal of influence on whether a child uses alcohol later in life. “What parents may not realize,” says [Name] [Title] “is that children say that their parents’ disapproval of underage drinking is a key reason they have chosen not to drink.”

SAMHSA 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.

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¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2008. *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use—Overview of Key Findings. 2008* (electronic version). Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/overview2008.pdf>.







Appendix D: Poster/Flyer







Poster/Flyer

A Town Hall Meeting
Preventing Underage Drinking

When: [Date and time]

Where: [Location and address]

Speakers: [Names of guest speakers or panelists]

Sponsored by [Your organization name]

When people hear the phrase “underage drinking,” they often think of teenagers using alcohol. Nearly 1 out of every 7 10th graders (14.4 percent) and about 2 out of every 7 12th graders (27.6 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the last month.¹

[Insert local statistics.]

The prevalence of underage drinking increases with age, making it more important than ever to begin teaching youth at an early age about the dangers of alcohol.

The purpose of the Town Hall Meeting is to increase community awareness on the issue of underage drinking, identify how underage drinking affects the community, and brainstorm possible solutions. The meeting will provide an opportunity for parents, teachers, officials, youth, and other community members to voice their concerns and suggest ideas for preventing young people from using alcohol.

Tentative Agenda [revise to meet your needs]:

- Registration
- Featured Speaker: [Guest speaker name]
- Panelists: [Insert names]
- Questions and Answers

Underage Drinking Prevention: Town Hall Meetings is a national effort by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to educate youth, parents, caregivers, and other adults about the harmful effects of underage drinking.

For more information, call [Your name and phone number].

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2008. *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use—Overview of Key Findings. 2008* (electronic version). Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/overview2008.pdf>.







Appendix E: Talking Points for PowerPoint Presentation





Talking Points for PowerPoint Presentation

These talking points are for use with the PowerPoint presentation available on <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>.

By using the talking points with the PowerPoint presentation, you will make a more fact-filled and persuasive presentation about planning a Town Hall Meeting. A “slide icon” and the corresponding slide number indicate where talking points appear as PowerPoint slides. Talking points contain more information than the PowerPoint slides. Share a copy of these important talking points with everyone who will be helping to plan your Town Hall Meeting. (Please note: These talking points have also been incorporated into the PowerPoint presentation in the Notes section.)

(Opening Title) 2010 Town Hall Meetings

Slide 1

State of the Problem

Slide 2

- Alcohol use among children and adolescents starts early and increases rapidly with age. (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA]. 2007. *Monitoring the Future Survey* [electronic version]. Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/DrugPages/MTF.html>.)
- In 2008, nearly 16 percent of 8th graders, almost 29 percent of 10th graders, and over 43 percent of 12th graders reported drinking an alcoholic beverage in the previous month. Heavy drinking is a problem at all three grade levels. Among eighth graders, about 1 in 20 (5.4 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the past month. Nearly 1 out of every 7 10th graders (14.41 percent) and about 2 out of every 7 12th graders (27.6 percent) reported being drunk at least once in the last month. (NIDA. 2008. *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use—Overview of Key Findings, 2008* (electronic version). Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/overview2008.pdf>.)
- Perceived parental disapproval is a powerful influence on youthful alcohol use. Children who believe their parents would strongly disapprove of their using a particular substance are less likely to do so than those whose parents somewhat disapprove or neither approve nor disapprove. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2009. *Results from the 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings*. Retrieved from <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k8nsduh/2k8Results.cfm>.)

Underage Drinking Prevention: Town Hall Meetings

Slide 3

- Town Hall Meetings will take place all over America to raise awareness and talk about the issue of underage drinking during the week of March 22–March 26, 2010, which coincides with the start of April’s Alcohol Awareness Month.





What Is a Town Hall Meeting?

Slide 4

- A Town Hall Meeting is an opportunity for a community to:
 - Discuss a topic and its impact on the community.
 - Educate its members on the subject.
 - Encourage action.
- A Town Hall Meeting brings together politicians, teachers, business owners, service providers, faith-based and community leaders, and parents in a venue where an issue of concern can be discussed publicly.
- In this case, the prevention of underage drinking is of prime interest to every community.

Why Hold a Town Hall Meeting?

Slide 5

- A Town Hall Meeting can:
 - Raise awareness in the community about underage drinking and its risks.
 - Encourage community involvement in preventing underage drinking by making people aware of current efforts and suggesting ways to become involved.
 - Encourage community members to work together to determine effective strategies for preventing underage drinking and to develop a plan for implementing them.
 - Generate interest from the media.

Why Hold a Town Hall Meeting? (cont.)

Slide 6

- The whole community can learn about:
 - The dangers of underage drinking.
 - The impact of underage drinking on the community.
 - The importance of preventative steps for youth.
 - The value of parents discussing the issue with their children.
 - The value of changing the community environment within which underage drinking takes place.
 - Other steps the community can take to prevent young people from trying alcohol.

Getting Started: Step One

Slide 7

- Decide what kind of Town Hall Meeting to have.
- Determine how large and complex the event should be.
- The following slides offer samples of activities that you can do for various levels of Town Hall Meetings.

Simple Event

Slide 8

- Simple event:
 - Combine the Town Hall Meeting with another community event, such as a PTA meeting or a major school event.
 - Include adults and youth.
 - Hold the event in a school gymnasium or auditorium.
 - Limit the event to an hour or an hour and a half.
 - Prepare a media advisory or news release to encourage media coverage.
 - Involve mayors and other public officials, police and health representatives, faith-based organizations, and other representatives.





Complex Event

Slide 9

- Complex event:
 - Make the meeting a separate event, possibly in a hotel ballroom, school auditorium, local library, or an alcohol and drug information resource center.
 - Prepare flyers or mailings to reach out to the entire community.
 - Use the media kit as a guide to help reach out to the media and encourage press coverage.
 - Videotape the meeting for your records or for future use.
 - Involve mayors and other public officials, police and health representatives, faith-based organizations, and other representatives.
 - Offer snacks or light refreshments.
 - Plan a follow-up meeting to discuss lessons learned and results.
 - Organize a post-meeting reception.

Once you have decided what kind of Town Hall Meeting to host, it's time to begin...

Getting Started: Next Steps

Slide 10

- Identify and enlist people who are motivated to work—and who can make things happen—to be part of your planning committee.
- Form partnerships with local organizations or businesses to increase the visibility of the Town Hall Meeting.
- Meet with the planning committee:
 - Take notes and keep track of the key points during the meeting.
 - Keep a record of everything that is done.
 - Make sure every volunteer has a specific role and assigned tasks.
 - Use the “Getting Started” checklist in the Community Briefing Prevention Toolkit for assistance.

Key Planning Decisions

Slide 11

- Committee members play an important role in ensuring that the Town Hall Meeting runs smoothly. They will work together to decide:
 - When and where the meeting will be held.
 - Who will present and what their focus will be.
 - What type of media coverage will be most effective for the purpose of the meeting.
- Committee members also will decide on:
 - Meeting preparation logistics.
 - Meeting participants.
 - Meeting supplements.
- Use the “Planning Committee” checklist in the Community Briefing Prevention Toolkit for assistance.





Advance Preparations

Slide 12

- Several items should be considered before the day of the meeting. Each will help keep the focus of the Town Hall Meeting on preventing underage drinking.
 - Choose a moderator to explain the purpose of the meeting.
 - Identify sponsors as well as VIPs and speakers or panelists.
 - Have sign-up sheets for attendees and speakers.
 - Have an agenda that includes the names of the VIPs and sponsors.
 - Determine the amount of time for each speaker's presentation.
 - Decide whether questions to or from the panelists will be allowed.

Advance Preparations (cont.)

Slide 13

- Obtain signed releases if a photo, audiotape, videotape, or report is used.
- Consider showing a video or film clip on underage alcohol use to generate discussion.
- Determine how to handle any necessary post-meeting cleanup.
- Send out an advisory to the media and make follow-up calls to ensure that the event will be on their calendars and that they will attend.
- Contact VIPs, speakers, and sponsors to make sure they know the schedule and the length of time they may speak.
- Use the Planning Committee checklists and the media samples in the Community Briefing Prevention Toolkit.

Day-of Activities

Slide 14

- The day of the Town Hall Meeting:
 - Arrive early to make sure the room is set up properly.
 - Greet participants and show them to their seats.
 - Steer media to the reserved section.
 - Start on time and keep the panel moving.

Immediate Follow-Up

Slide 15

- After the Town Hall Meeting:
 - Send out a news release describing the meeting and mentioning speakers and the number of attendees.
 - Make sure to follow up with the media representatives who attended.
 - Write thank-you letters to the VIPs.
 - Develop and distribute a report on the meeting.
 - Follow up with agencies and organizations and get their feedback.





Long-Term Follow-Up

Slide 16

- To make sure the Town Hall Meeting is not a one-time event:
 - Identify members of the community who are interested in working on a follow-up plan.
 - Consider using the Strategic Prevention Framework as a planning process in deciding a long-term plan. Steps in this process include:
 - Assessment.
 - Capacity Building.
 - Planning.
 - Implementation.
 - Evaluation.

For more information on this process, visit: <http://prevention.samhsa.gov/about/spf.aspx>.



