

Underage Drinking: Forum Planning Guide

Preface

Prevention of underage drinking involves youth, family members, schools, community groups, and other traditional and non-traditional partners. Often the first and simplest step to prevention is an open, non-judgmental discussion about issues and perceptions surrounding underage drinking.

This guide shows readers how to develop community forums that will help promote such discussions.

The community forum described in this brief guide is merely one element in what should be a sustained process of outreach to and engagement with youth and their families.

Other elements of prevention include but are not limited to:

- ▣ Ongoing dialogue and engagement with youth, family members, schools, community groups, and other traditional and non-traditional partners.
- ▣ Partnering with youth, parents, and faculty to create and provide tools and resources to promote good decision-making.
- ▣ Creating and reinforcing policies that promote healthy decisions.
- ▣ Working with traditional and non-traditional media to reinforce healthy messages.
- ▣ Community organizing to develop supportive, local standards.

Five Steps to Planning Community Forums on Underage Drinking

1. Pre-screening/identifying host sites
2. Event planning
3. Promotion
4. Event itself
5. Follow-up

Step 1: Pre-screening/identifying host sites

- Determine prospective hosts
 - Research current and previous activities/programs to assess leadership's commitment to prevention of underage drinking
 - Determine where the decision-making and support lie (e.g., politically, organizationally, etc.)
 - Examine capacity (e.g., time and availability to host, ample staff, parking, breakout rooms for large & small groups, etc.).
 - Choose host and schedule an initial meeting
 - Create and then present a brief proposal explaining how the community forum can complement and reinforce current activities/programs
 - Ensure host is committed to promoting the event to attendees
 - Discuss roles, responsibilities, and expectations
- Listen carefully for host cues regarding culture, expectations
- Visit the site; determine where large groups and breakout groups can convene

Step 2: Event planning

- Determine partners--youth, family members, schools, community groups, and other traditional and non-traditional partners--and their related roles, responsibilities
- Set timeline for actions
- Conduct regular planning meetings (in person, conference, e-mail, etc.)
- Determine event agenda and number of facilitators and training assistants needed (via desired ratio of participants to facilitators)
- Prepare and train facilitators
- Choose and finalize presentation materials, giveaways, and any audio/visual resources needed (build in adequate time for design, editing, review, and copying). (See last page for sample handouts)

- Create “count down” cards¹, if necessary, to help presenters keep track of the amount of time left in their session
- For a general event planning checklist visit Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities website at <http://www.tasc.org/preview/prevention.html>

Step 3: Promotion

- Directly engage key leaders (e.g., principals, coaches, parent groups, student groups, community leaders)
- Outreach to partners (personal calls, visits, e-mails, conference calls)
- Outreach to attendees (personal calls, visits, e-mails, conference calls, letters, web postings); let them know what to expect
- Media outreach (community calendars, press releases, editorial board meetings)

Note: Attendance at a previous forum topped 300 because of the High School’s outreach efforts:

Letter from principal to 3,000 High School and 8th grade families
 E-mail follow-up from principal to 2,200 parents
 PTSA Newsletter e-mail to 1,000 families
 Booster e-News
 Letter to 450 Key Communicators
 City Council Announcement
 Meetings and correspondence with:
 Athletic coaches
 Student Mentors
 Adult Mentors
 Middle School Principals

Step 4: Event itself

- Arrive early
- Prepare resource tables
- Check audio, video, room set-up, signage, etc.
- Remind presenters to repeat questions asked by the audience
- Do not exceed the event ending time as advertised in promotional materials
- For more details, see logistic section of event planning checklist at Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities website at <http://www.tasc.org/preview/prevention.html>

Note: Be prepared for last minute glitches and adjustments

¹ These are 8-1/2 x 11” cards printed with “10 minutes”, “5 minutes”, “time is up”, etc.

Step 5: Follow-up

- Send thank-you notes/e-mails as appropriate
- Hold debriefing meeting(s) with planners and hosts to discuss what worked and what can be improved
- Determine next steps; if relevant, document and plan accordingly
- Adjust this planning guide as needed

Useful Handouts for Underage Drinking Community Forums

The FACTS about Youth & Alcohol

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

This one-page fact sheet outlines information on the prevalence and consequences of teen alcohol use.

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/PSA/factsheet.pdf>

Make a Difference: Talk to Your Child about Alcohol

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

This guide is geared towards parents and guardians of young people ages 10 to 14.

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/NR/rdonlyres/3F7A2293-C695-4B82-882D-9A19BF2782E6/0/Children.pdf>

Start Talking Before They Start Drinking: A Family Guide

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) have designed this guide to assist parents in talking with their teens about these issues.

(http://family.samhsa.gov/media/familyguide/Underagebrochure_10_27_released_2.pdf)

For more resources visit StopAlcoholAbuse.Gov.

Sample Event/Promotion Materials

- Agenda
- Flyer

Please visit <http://www.tasc.org/preview/prevention.html> for copies of sample event/promotion materials.