

ATTACHMENT 5: Message Concepts

UNDERAGE ALCOHOL USE PREVENTION MEDIA CAMPAIGN TESTING OF MESSAGE CONCEPTS *FINAL*

BACKGROUND

Testing message concepts will help us understand how the target audience—parents of children ages 9–15—views the issue of underage drinking. It will reveal information about:

- their current knowledge levels regarding underage drinking,
- their level of concern,
- their attitudes about how to deal with it in their family and their community,
- ideas that motivate them, and those that do not, and why, and
- what opportunities can be created to engage them.

The message concepts the Contractor will test **will not be the actual words that would be used in any given message, but rather the ideas**. The purpose of the testing is to stimulate conversation, engage parents in thinking and talking about the topic, and thus provide program planners with additional insight to plan effective communication that will motivate parents to action.

[PREVALANCE AND RELATIVE RISK] [This title is for internal reference only, it would not appear on the page provided to research participants.]

Underage drinking is more common than you think.

Many parents worry that that their children will try illegal drugs or smoking, or even be taken or attacked. Did you know that there is a much greater risk that they'll drink alcohol than any of these other concerns?

It's true. Research by NIH, CDC, and the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration shows that a shocking number of children try alcohol—and drink alcohol regularly. Millions of children begin drinking between the ages of 9 and 15. In fact, 30 percent of youth are drinking by age 12–14, and half of all 15-year-olds have had at least one full drink, not just a few sips.

It's fairly easy for children to get alcohol. Research shows that more than 85 percent of youth say they drink at their home or someone else's home. They see adults drink, so they think it's okay for them. And even if adults they know don't drink alcohol, some youth do it to rebel. All youth see images everywhere that show drinking creates fun and makes them cool and attractive. So maybe we shouldn't be so shocked after all that so many youth are drinking. Fortunately, it's a reality we can change.

Learn what you can do to make sure your child doesn't drink alcohol. Check out our Web site at www.xxxxxxx for more information.

[LINKAGE TO OTHER NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS] [This title is for internal reference only, it would not appear on the page provided to research participants.]

Drinking at a young age: Downright Dangerous

We all know that young bodies and minds are not ready for alcohol. Even a little alcohol makes them a lot less able to control themselves and make good decisions. But what you may not know is how drinking alcohol makes children much more likely to do things that can truly hurt them, and their chances at success for the rest of their lives.

Youth who drink alcohol risk their health, their development, and their safety. Drinking at a young age is linked with risky sexual behavior, which can lead to pregnancy and disease. It also has been linked to poor grades in school. It can cause impulsive or aggressive acts—like vandalism or fighting that can mean trouble with the law that will follow a child for years to come. Also, new research shows that alcohol use can change the developing brain. These changes can lead to thinking and memory problems and other mental health issues.

Over the long term, people who start drinking alcohol early have bigger problems with it when they become adults. More than 40 percent of people who begin drinking before age 15 will develop alcohol abuse or dependence at some time in their lives.

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[UNDERAGE DRINKERS GET DRUNK] [This title is for internal reference only, it would not appear on the page provided to research participants.]

They're not just drinking; they're getting drunk.

Parents know that as part of being young, children make mistakes along the way. Millions of children—more than ever before—are making the mistake of trying alcohol. Some parents may think that trying it out is just part of youth growing up and having fun. They think it's sort of a "rite of passage."

What many parents don't know is that today, most youth who drink are not only breaking the law, they are risking their health and safety by drinking a lot. Because their brains are not yet mature, many youth get more excited by alcohol and drink more at one time than adults. In fact 65 percent of teens who drink report that they "get drunk" in a typical month.

That means they are more likely to get into things you don't want for them, such as fights, vandalism, tobacco, and illegal drugs. They also can get into risky sexual behaviors. Sadly, all of these things can affect them for the rest of their lives. But even worse, the heavy drinking that children are doing can cause alcohol poisoning, and even death.

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[KIDS DO LISTEN TO YOU] [This title is for internal reference only, it would not appear on the page provided to research participants.]

You make the difference.

Parents today worry about the many outside influences in their children's lives. The Internet, movies, television, and video games bombard our children with ideas that go against our goals for them. It sometimes seems that the approval of their friends is the most important force in their lives. And all these influences often suggest that drinking alcohol is cool, fun, or glamorous. You may feel your voice is lost in the noise.

But don't be fooled. Decades of research have proven again and again that you are the most important influence on your children. What you say and do shapes their values and behavior. When it comes to drinking alcohol, talking with them about what you expect, your rules, and consequences makes all the difference in the world. Also, what you think and do about drinking say a lot to your children. With your help, your children can learn to cope with peer pressure and make good decisions for the rest of their lives.

A surprising number of children in America are drinking at a younger age, but parents are the front line in making it stop. No one can do it better than you.

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[IT'S JUST WHAT PARENTS DO] [This title is for internal reference only, it would not appear on the page provided to research participants.]

All in a day's parenting

As a parent, you do your best to keep your child healthy, safe, and thriving. When they were young, you changed their diapers and made sure they got enough sleep and plenty to eat. Now you check on their school work. You try to keep up with their friends. And no matter how busy you are, you work hard to be involved in the things that are important to them.

As youth get into middle school and high school, talking with them about drinking alcohol is one the most important things you can do as a parent. Research shows that a huge number of youth are drinking at younger ages. In fact, 1 in 3 youth are drinking by age 12-14. Half of all 15-year-olds have had at least one full drink—not just a few sips. But the good news is that research also shows that parents are the main reason youth stay away from alcohol. Many parents have proven that talking with children on a regular basis about not drinking does work to help keep them sober, healthy, and safe. It's just as important as everything else you do.

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