GETTING CANDID: FRAMING THE CONVERSATION AROUND
YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

A Communication Pathway for Providers
Revised February 2023

The pathway is intended to help youth-serving providers communicate with middle and high school age youth about substance use prevention. It is a companion to Getting Candid: Framing the Conversation Around Youth Substance Use Prevention Message Guide for Providers.

The pathway begins with establish trust and gather insights, providing a relational foundation that should be revisited throughout. Then, providers can build on this foundation to frame the communication, make the case by sharing compelling information, and suggest actions youth can take consistent with substance use prevention.

For a more detailed description of the pathway and how it was informed by insights from youth and youth-serving providers, please refer to the Message Guide.

### ESTABLISH TRUST

Build rapport and establish trust.

1. Create a safe space.
2. Be authentic.
3. Approach the conversation informally.
4. Do more listening than talking.
5. Be transparent and trustworthy.
6. Pay attention to body language.

### GATHER INSIGHTS

Seek guidance and input from youth about what matters to them.

1. What matters most to you in your life? And why?
2. What do you look forward to most in the coming year (or after you graduate, or beyond)? And why?
3. When you’re faced with making a tough choice or decision, what do you consider or think about most?

### FRAME THE COMMUNICATION

### MAKE THE CASE

### SUGGEST ACTION

For more detail on these steps in the pathway, please see the next page.
**Establish Trust**

**Gather Insights**

**Frame the Communication**

**Make the Case: General Substance Use**

**Suggest Action**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choose the frame for communication based on insights from youth.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Future</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t let drug and alcohol use change or control your plans for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk of Addiction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug and alcohol use change parts of your brain that impact how you think and act. The more you use them, the harder it can be to stop, even if you want to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for middle school) There are people in your life who matter to you. And you try hard not to let them down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for high school) There are people in your life who matter to you. And you try hard to make them proud.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in sports, music, hobbies or other activities can help you build friendships, stay in shape, get into and receive scholarships for college and have fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-affirmation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You respect yourself and want to make decisions that are best for you. Trust yourself and your choice not to use drugs or alcohol.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select evidence to provide compelling reasons not to use drugs or alcohol.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Impact</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing drugs and alcohol is illegal for people your age and costs money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in recovery from addiction often say one of the things they regret most about their addiction was the trust they lost from people who care about them. They fear some broken relationships will never heal, and others will take a long time to repair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in recovery from addiction say substance use can change your priorities and fog your judgment in ways that can lead to problems at school or work. Don’t let substance use take away your opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Health Impact</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug and alcohol use can change parts of your brain that impact how you think and act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The younger you are when you start using drugs or alcohol, the more likely you are to become addicted. The more you use them the harder it can be to stop even if you want to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being healthy means something different to everyone. Don’t let drug and alcohol use get in the way of being as healthy as you want to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health Impact</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life can be really hard. Sometimes people think that using drugs will make the problems go away, but it only adds another problem to the pile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using drugs and alcohol may seem like a quick and easy way to relieve stress, but there are healthy ways to take care of yourself.</td>
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<th>Select one or more actions to suggest.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explore alternative ways of dealing with stress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make your own personal commitment or pledge to avoid alcohol and drugs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to your friends and encourage them not to use drugs and alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate yourself about drugs and alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to someone if you feel tempted or pressured to use drugs or alcohol.</td>
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TheNationalCouncil.org
The messages on this page are intended for communicating with youth about specific substances and can be used in conjunction with the frame the communication and suggest action messages shown on the previous page.

### Alcohol

**General Impact**
Drinking alcohol can impact your memory and the way you think and act. You could end up fighting with friends, not remembering what you said or did, or passing out.

**Physical Health Impact**
Excessive drinking contributes to more than 3,500 deaths of people below the age of 21 in the U.S. each year.

People your age who drink alcohol can get sick from use and have hangovers or put themselves at risk of harm from alcohol poisoning, car crashes from driving after drinking alcohol, and injuries such as falling or drowning.

**Mental Health Impact**
Alcohol can have a major impact on your mental health because of the way it impacts your brain. It can alter your mood, energy, memory, and increase anxiety and depression.

### Delta-8 THC

**General Impact**
Delta-8 THC products may be marketed as a milder form of marijuana, but their strength and contents are variable, and their harmful effects are unknown.

**Physical Health Impact**
Delta-8 THC is not regulated so you don’t really know what is in it. Some people end up having a medical emergency because the concentration was too high or they didn’t realize Delta-8 THC was psychoactive until it was too late.

**Mental Health Impact**
Delta-8 THC affects brain function, and can cause vomiting, anxiety and dizziness if used in high concentrations.

### Vaping

**General Impact**
Vape companies regularly change up their chemical formulas to get around regulations and safety testing of their products.

**Physical Health Impact**
Vape companies have a stronger motive to sell products than to care about the long-term health of their consumers.

**Mental Health Impact**
Some people think vaping is harmless, but it is associated with serious mental health effects, like anxiety, suicidal ideation and depression.

### Fentanyl

**General Impact**
To build a reputation for selling strong drugs, dealers sometimes mix especially dangerous drugs like fentanyl with other drugs like prescription pills.

**Physical Health Impact**
Teen overdose deaths have tripled over the last few years due to a dangerous substance called fentanyl. Fentanyl is often found in fake prescription pills.

**Mental Health Impact**
It only takes a pinprick-sized amount of fentanyl to be a deadly dose. And it’s sometimes hidden in fake prescription pills.

Source: TheNationalCouncil.org
# Marijuana

**Physical Health Impact**

Since your brain is still developing, using marijuana during your teenage years can alter your brain chemistry. This affects your ability to pay attention and remember things, which can result in lower test scores and academic success.

**Mental Health Impact**

You might have heard people say marijuana use is fun. But, for some people, it leads to extreme paranoia and fear, scary hallucinations and dependency.

# Polysubstance use

**Physical Health Impact**

Most overdose deaths happen when mixing drugs like prescription opioids or heroin with other drugs like antidepressants and/or alcohol.

Using more than one substance or drug at a time is never safe. That's because the effect of mixing drugs is even stronger and less predictable than one drug alone. That makes it even easier to overdose or die.

**Mental Health Impact**

Using substances can increase the risk of mental health challenges, including depression, extreme paranoia and fear, scary hallucinations or even suicide. The risk of those is higher when using more than one substance at the same time.

# Prescription drugs not prescribed by a doctor

*(OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet)*

**Physical Health Impact**

Use of prescription pain medicine without a doctor’s prescription or differently than how a doctor told you to use it can be addictive and dangerous. More than 30 people die from overdoses involving prescription pain medications every day.

Even people who are prescribed pain medications by a doctor can become addicted. Signs of addiction can include feeling nauseous when you stop taking the drug or needing to take more medication than before to feel better.

**Mental Health Impact**

Using prescription pills not as prescribed by a doctor can cause brain changes that increase feelings of depression and anxiety over time.