

# A Communication Pathway for Providers

The pathway shown here 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 Message Guide includes a detailed description of the pathway and how it was informed by input and insights from youth and from providers of services to youth.

The pathway begins with steps to **establish trust** and **gather insights**, which provide a foundation for the communication and 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.

While providers in a community behavioral health center might use this to guide their conversation with the youth they are serving, a primary care provider might use this in conversation with a youth who self-identifies as being curious about substance use, pressured to use substances or using substances on occasion.

For more information about using the pathway to communicate with youth about substance use, 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.

**NOTE:** See page 9 of the [Message Guide](#) for more detail.



## 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?

**NOTE:** Use insights from the responses to these questions to select the frame for the conversation. For example, if the youth responds by talking about their plans for high school, college or beyond, then use the Future frame at right. See page 11 of the [Message Guide](#) for more detail.



## FRAME THE COMMUNICATION



## MAKE THE CASES



## SUGGEST ACTION

For more detail on these steps in the pathway, please see [page 2](#).



## ESTABLISH TRUST



## GATHER INSIGHTS



## FRAME THE COMMUNICATION

Seek input from youth about what matters to them to select the most meaningful message frame.

### The Future

Don't let drug and alcohol use change or control your plans for the future.

### Risk of Addiction

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.

### Relationships

(for middle school) There are people in your life who matter to you. And you try hard not to let them down.

(for high school) There are people in your life who matter to you. And you try hard to make them proud.

### Activities

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.

### Self-affirmation

You respect yourself and want to make decisions that are best for you. Trust yourself and your choice not to use drugs or alcohol.

**NOTE:** See page 12 of the [Message Guide](#) for more detail.



## MAKE THE CASES

Select evidence to provide compelling reasons not to use drugs or alcohol.

### General Impact

Purchasing drugs and alcohol is illegal for people your age and costs money.

Marijuana use can affect your ability to do things like studying, driving a car or playing sports.

Drinking alcohol can impact your memory and the way you think and act.

### Physical Health Impact

Marijuana use directly affects the brain.

Even people who are prescribed pain medications by a doctor can become addicted.

Addiction to prescription pain medications can happen after just five days of use.

Drinking contributes to more than 3,500 deaths of people under age 21 in the U.S. each year.

### Mental Health

Alcohol can alter your mood, energy and memory and increase anxiety or depression.

Marijuana can result in confusion, anxiety, fear and mistrust.

**NOTE:** Evidence statements can be used with any message frame. They should be selected based on the context of the communication and, if relevant, the specific substance(s) being discussed. See page 13 of the [Message Guide](#) for more detail.



## SUGGEST ACTION

Select one or more actions to suggest.

Explore alternative ways of dealing with stress.

Make your own personal commitment or pledge to avoid alcohol and drugs.

Talk to your friends and encourage them not to use drugs and alcohol.

Educate yourself about drugs and alcohol.

Talk to someone if you feel tempted or pressured to use drugs or alcohol.

**NOTE:** Actions listed above can be used with any of the message frames or case statements. See page 14 of the [Message Guide](#) for more detail.

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