

Recruiting and Training Trusted Adults

A trusted adult is someone youth may turn to for help and will take them seriously.⁴⁶ A trusted adult is someone youth have independently chosen to trust and is a safe, reliable, and honest figure who listens without judgement, agenda, or expectation and provides support and encouragement.⁴⁷ In early conversations with students, ask which school staff students look up to, trust, and connect well with. There are often a few staff members who students will identify as a trusted adult. Trusted adults can be trained to serve as a site champion for the SNMC, playing a vital role in disseminating messages, mitigating opposition, and providing feedback regarding implementation.

Orientation Letter to Recruit Trusted Adults

Dear [Name of trusted adult],

Your school recently took part in a youth discussion group where youth independently identified you as a trusted adult. In other words, students at your school see you as a trusted source of information. As such, we would like to personally invite you to be involved in a new health promotion initiative at [School Name].

National surveys show that a growing number, and the vast majority, of youth in the U.S. do not use any substances. Yet both youth and adults overwhelmingly overestimate the number of 12-18-year-olds who use substances (especially alcohol, nicotine, and marijuana). They believe that substance use is more common than it actually is (e.g., everyone drinks, most parents let their kids drink) and they underestimate the healthy choices made by youth. The truth is that most youth make healthy choices and do not use substances.

As part of this initiative, [School Name] will use posters and other media to highlight and celebrate the healthy choices and behaviors most youth make -- their true positive norms. Research shows that exposure to such information increases healthy behaviors and decreases substance use. This approach is called a social norms media campaign (SNMC) and it is grounded in the science of the Social Norms Approach, which has been shown to work to prevent substance use. SNMCs have been used successfully with students and adults in the U.S. and other countries.

An Implementation Team has been assembled to oversee this initiative, including developing and disseminating multimedia throughout the school year to highlight positive student norms (e.g., Most [School Name] students make healthy choices NOT to use substances). As a trusted adult, students have identified you as a believable source of information. The comments and information you share with students can be very powerful.

We ask that you join our team and work with us to reinforce the true positive norms that the overwhelming majority of [middle/high] school students do not use any tobacco, alcohol, pills, or other substances. It is our pleasure to invite you to view this

brief orientation video, which will provide greater details on the science behind the approach. It can be viewed [here](#).

Additionally, we will be holding an orientation session with trusted adults from our school on [date]. This meeting will provide greater guidance on how you can be involved in the campaign to help encourage the healthy behaviors of our students.

Trusted Adult Training

The following resources and activities may help trusted adults prepare for their role.

1. Introduction letter describing the role of the trusted adult (see above).
 - a. Identifies them as a trusted adult
 - b. Briefly introduces the campaign and their potential role
2. Orientation to the campaign
 - a. Informational video on the social norms campaign
 - b. Overview of the social norms approach
 - c. Examples of campaign materials
3. A copy of this implementation guide
4. Site champion preparation meeting to cover:
 - a. Their selection as a trusted adult (e.g., Your school recently took part in a youth discussion group where students independently identified you as a trusted adult. Students at your school see you as a trusted source of information).
 - a. The importance and role of the trusted adult
 - b. Sample scenarios representing and disbelief, pushback, etc., and responses
 - c. Ideas for incorporating messages into their daily activities and conversations
 - d. List of positive norm messages from the social norms survey that they can be equipped to share. For example:
 - i. Students at XYZ school disapprove of using substances.
 - ii. Many students at XYZ school incorrectly assume most other students are using substances.
 - iii. Students at XYZ school who incorrectly assume other students are using, are at greatest risk for using substances.
 - e. Q&A