


GETTING CANDID: Framing the Conversation Around Youth Substance Use Prevention

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About Getting Candid




Purpose

To assess effects of the pandemic on substance use risks and drivers.



Approach

National online assessments, focus groups, youth ambassadors and expert advisors.




Result

Message guide, toolkit and resources for providers to support youth ages 12-18

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Project Lead: National Council for Mental Wellbeing
Strategic Partner: Metropolitan Group | **Data & Analysis:** Lake Research Partners


Advisory Group

- Behavioral Health Innovators
- FrameWorks Institute
- Center for Addiction & Mental Health Research, Kaiser Permanente
- Lifeway International
- Collaborative to Advance Health Services, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Nursing and Health Studies
- Partnership to End Addiction
- Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)
- Peers Enjoying a Sober Education (PEASE) Academy
- DACCO Behavioral Health
- School-Based Health Alliance
- Truth Initiative
- White Bison
- William J. Ostiguy High School

Youth Ambassadors

Seblework Alemu	Saint Luan	Riya Ramakrishnan	Hamid Torabzade
Tracy Das	Isadora Paul	Samantha Richter	Jamie Ann Visconde
Reanna Felix	Ayden O'Connor	Elijah Seay	Jordan Young
Iliana Lara	Isadora Paul	Anona Thomas	

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Learning Objectives

1. Review **youth assessment findings** that helped inform substance use prevention messaging.
2. Apply the **communication pathway** for framing the conversation.
3. Learn how to **engage youth** in program content and design to elevate their voices and lived experiences.
4. Discuss **implementation** and using the Getting Candid resources.

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Who's in the room?

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National Assessment Data

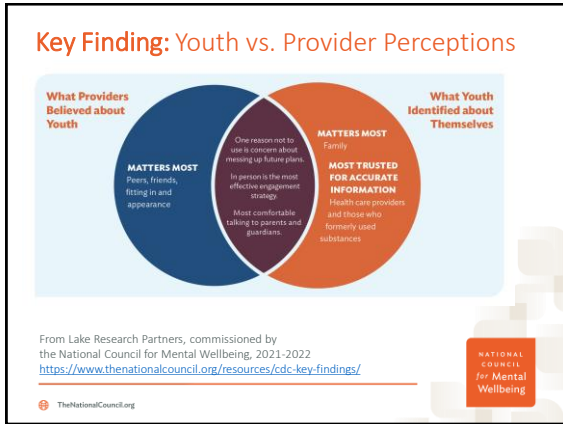
- **FOUR ONLINE SURVEYS = 2,979 youth**
 - Weighted by age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, region of the country and area community type (e.g., rural, urban)
- **ONE ONLINE SURVEY = 761 youth-serving providers**
 - Representing community behavioral health, education, healthcare, government and other community organizations

From Lake Research Partners, commissioned by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2021-2022
<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/cdc-key-findings/>

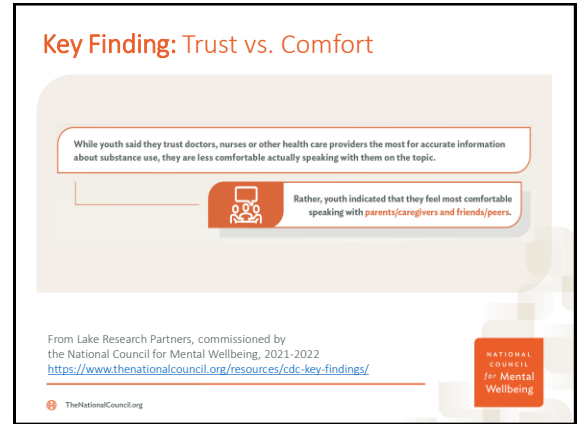
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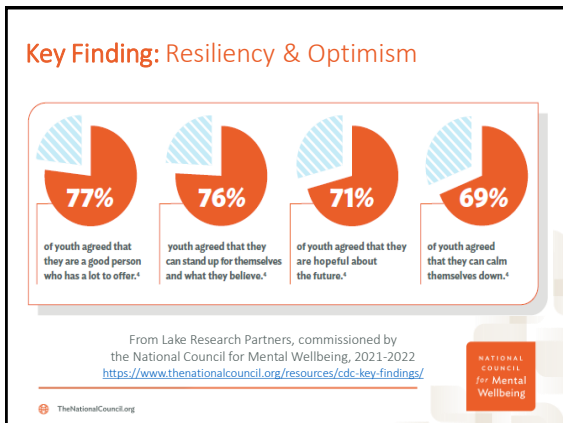
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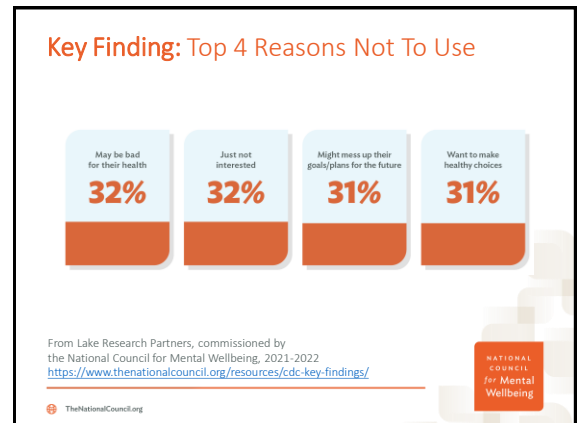
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Key Finding: Perception of Fentanyl

A majority of youth are **not concerned** about alcohol and other drug use in their own lives.

But if someone they know was using drugs, 77% report they would be **concerned about fentanyl exposure**.

However, **less than 50% of youth** report knowing what fentanyl is and report that fentanyl would be one of the hardest substances for them to acquire.

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Youth in Rural Areas

- It is noticeably easier for youth in rural areas to get alcohol and tobacco/nicotine.
- Rural youth are among youth most likely to feel stressed.
- A quarter of youth in rural areas said they were not concerned about someone they knew were using drugs being exposed to fentanyl. Rural youth had second largest percentage who were unsure about fentanyl (17%).
- Youth in rural areas were more likely to say their peers might NOT use substances because it might interfere with sports/music/hobbies/other activities.
- Youth in rural areas were more likely to know about youth substance use prevention/treatment programs in their community.


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Your Role as a Youth-serving Provider

- Create a safe space to **normalize conversations** about substance use and its connection to health, school, finances and relationships.
- Maximize **regular touch points and established relationships** to reinforce prevention messages and encourage healthy peer relationships.
- Identify potential risk and **protective factors**.



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Video: What Youth Want Us to Know




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https://youtu.be/kyD4DCDv_wU

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Inside the Getting Candid Message Guide




<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/getting-candid>

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Communication Pathway



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Build rapport and establish trust.

Youth Ambassador Tips

- Do not assume to understand **experiences and/or identities** of people from different cultures and/or religions.
- Ask youth to briefly explain their **cultural and/or religious background** to include the meanings of traditions, some of the holidays and/or celebrations, & important people within the group.
- Ask youth **how they would like** their sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural and/or religious background recognized & respected when receiving care and services.
- Ask youth about any **doubts or concerns** and try to uncover any misconceptions they may have about seeking services. If possible, politely and respectfully help resolve misconceptions.

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GATHER INSIGHTS

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

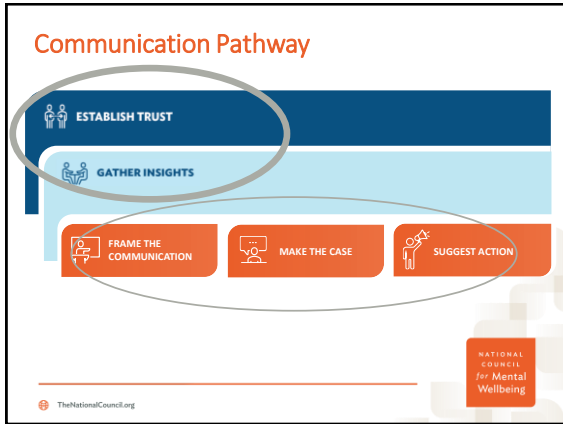
Ask things like...

- What matters most to you in your life and why?
- What are you looking forward to most in the coming year (or after you graduate, or beyond) and why?
- When you're faced with making a tough choice or decision, what do you consider or think about most?

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“What Matters” Becomes the Framework

What Matters...?	Message Frame
Plans for the coming year, for entering high school, college or for the future in general	⇒ The future
Physical or mental health	⇒ Risk of addiction
Relationships (e.g., parents/guardians, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors)	⇒ Relationships
Activities in or out of school (e.g., music, sports, volunteering)	⇒ Activities
Being respected for autonomy and being able to make one’s own choices	⇒ Self-affirmation

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Communication Pathway

ESTABLISH TRUST

GATHER INSIGHTS

FRAME THE COMMUNICATION **MAKE THE CASE**

MOST EFFECTIVE MESSAGES TESTED WITH YOUTH:

The Future: Don't let drug & alcohol use change or control your plans for the future.

Risk of Addiction: Drug & alcohol use changes parts of your brain that impact how you think and act. The more you use, the harder it can be to stop, even if you want to.

Relationships: There are people in your life who matter to you. *(For middle school)* And you try hard not to let them down. *(For high school)* 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 & receive scholarships for college & have fun.

Self-affirmation: You respect yourself & want to make decisions that are best for you. Trust yourself & your choice not to use drugs or alcohol.

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Communication Pathway

ESTABLISH TRUST

GATHER INSIGHTS

FRAME THE COMMUNICATION **MAKE THE CASE**

EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS CONSIDERED MOST CONVINCING BY YOUTH:

- **People in recovery** from addiction often say one of the things they regret most about their addiction is the trust they lost from people who care about them.
- **Vape** companies regularly change up their chemical formulas to get around regulations and safety testing of their products.
- It only takes a pinprick-sized amount of **fentanyl** to be a deadly dose. And it's sometimes hidden in fake prescription pills.
- **Delta-8 THC** is not regulated, so you don't really know what is in it. Some people ended 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.

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Communication Pathway

ESTABLISH TRUST

GATHER INSIGHTS

FRAME THE COMMUNICATION **MAKE THE CASE** **SUGGEST ACTION**

ACTIONS IDENTIFIED BY YOUTH AS THOSE THEY WOULD MOST LIKELY TAKE:

- Explore new ways of dealing with **stress**, like music, reading, art, getting outdoors, talking with friends you trust or just being by yourself.*
- **Educate** yourself about alcohol, tobacco/nicotine, marijuana & other drugs by visiting a website or information on social media from a factual source.*
- Make your own personal **commitment** or pledge to avoid alcohol, tobacco/nicotine, marijuana & other drugs.*
- Find someone you can **talk** to if you feel tempted or pressured to use alcohol, tobacco/nicotine, marijuana & other drugs.
- Talk to your **friends**. Encourage them not to use alcohol, tobacco/nicotine, marijuana & other drugs.*

*Resonated particularly well with middle school youth.

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Discussion

1. Which step of the communication pathway feels the most familiar to your work? Which step is most unfamiliar?
2. In what ways could this communications pathway link into your public health initiatives?

Communication Pathway

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Youth Ambassador Program (YAP)

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States Represented

- California
- Michigan
- Connecticut
- Missouri
- Florida
- New York
- Hawaii
- Ohio
- Illinois
- Rhode Island
- Massachusetts
- Texas

Racial and Ethnic Groups Represented

- Asian or Asian American
- Hispanic or Latino
- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Middle Eastern

Academic Level

- High school
- College
- Graduate school

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Getting Candid YAP

Youth ambassadors can connect with each other and offer advice and support. In our monthly meetings, participants are free to open up about personal issues in their lives, and we often go around sharing similar experiences or giving advice. It's a really safe space and it benefits the youth ambassador on a personal level. It also offers new perspectives to the project leaders, health care providers and other experts we talk to."

—Sammy, Getting Candid Youth Ambassador

By participating in Getting Candid's YAP, youth ambassadors gained opportunities for...

1. Learning
2. Connecting
3. Compensation

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Youth Ambassador Example Activities

- Share Your Why Videos
- Getting Candid: What Youth Want You to Know
- Blog Posts:
 - Preventing Illicit Drug Use on College Campuses
 - COVID-19's Lasting Impact on Youth Mental Health and Substance Use
 - De-stressing and Improving Mental Health and Peer Pressure and Substance Use
- Participation in panel for in-person summit

Youth are aware of specific current events that have relevance to properly youth themselves can learn and be educated through their active involvement."

—Trey Dills, Getting Candid Youth Ambassador

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Step 1: Determine and Articulate YAP Purpose

- ✓ Establish YAP purpose
- ✓ Engage relevant stakeholders
- ✓ Incorporate data from community needs assessment
- ✓ Determine where YAP may be integrated
- ✓ Include youth in YAP planning efforts

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Step 2: Establish Clear, Youth-friendly Staffing

- Practice flexibility and understanding
- Designate staff time for supporting youth ambassadors & establish clear roles among staff
- Provide training and workshop for youth (and staff)
- Create a Safer Space

Six Recommendations to Create Safer Spaces for Young People

1. **What is staff?** Staff is a professional or an organization or group. There are many types of people working from behind the scenes, and they are all important to the success of the organization. They are the ones who make sure that the organization is running smoothly and that the staff is well-trained and supported.
2. **What is a safer space?** A safer space is a place where young people can feel safe and supported. It is a place where they can express their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment or punishment. It is a place where they can learn and grow, and where they can be themselves.
3. **How can we create a safer space?** There are many ways to create a safer space. One way is to provide training and support for staff. Another way is to establish clear roles and responsibilities for staff. A third way is to provide a safe and supportive environment for young people.
4. **What are some examples of safer spaces?** Examples of safer spaces include support groups, peer support groups, and community centers. They can also be created in schools, libraries, and other community settings.
5. **How can we ensure that a safer space is safe?** It is important to ensure that a safer space is safe for all young people. This means providing training and support for staff, and establishing clear policies and procedures. It also means providing a safe and supportive environment for young people.
6. **How can we ensure that a safer space is youth-friendly?** It is important to ensure that a safer space is youth-friendly. This means involving young people in the planning and implementation of the space. It also means providing a safe and supportive environment for young people.

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Step 3: Establish Compensation and Engagement Expectations



- Determine expectations for time and effort
- Clearly communicate participation expectations & compensation
- Pair documentation with in-person or virtual onboarding
- Create open bidirectional lines of communication
- Be prepared to be flexible

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Step 4: Recruit YAP Applicants with Purpose

- Invest staff time & program funding
- Advertise on social media and/or via targeted outreach & promotion
- Create an application and scoring rubric
- Be prepared with a clear onboarding process

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Step 5: Develop YAP Activities and Opportunities

- Create descriptions of YAP engagement opportunities
- Meet monthly with youth ambassadors
- Ensure staff have the capacity to support
- Solicit youth feedback
- Provide space for YAP ideas and innovation



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YAP Feedback

"This program was a dream come true! For many years I've desired to stand up for something meaningful and to be a part of something powerful, and I believe that this program fulfilled both of those. Mental health has been a passion of mine for a long time, and there has been nothing better than to have been a part of something like this. Together we've advocated for saving lives, teaching many people across the world about youth's struggles with mental health and substance use, and served as examples of shakers and movers for our generation. This program has educated me beyond what I ever thought I could know, and it opened so many doors for me, doors that were only distant dreams."

- Elijah Seay, Youth Ambassador

100% of Youth Ambassadors agreed that they:

- Are more confident in their ability to serve as a substance use prevention advocate among peers
- Have a better understanding of substance use prevention and mental wellbeing
- Would recommend participating in the YAP to peers

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Discussion

Where are you at when it comes to youth engagement and voice?



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Getting Candid Toolkit

Over 140 resources




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<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/getting-candid/>

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Substance Fact Sheets




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<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/getting-candid/make-the-case/>

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Questions and Comments



For more information about Getting Candid, please check out our website
www.thenationalcouncil.org/getting-candid/ or reach out to Amanda Stark
(Amandas@TheNationalCouncil.org)

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