

TIPS FOR CREATING YOUR OWN VIDEO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Guidelines and Tips

If you want to highlight a mental health or substance misuse issue in a visual way with the potential to reach a large audience, consider creating a video public service announcement (PSA). The following are some general guidelines and tips for how to create a PSA for your prevention event.

- 1. Decide whether a video PSA is the right format for your message.** Nowadays, there are many avenues for getting the word out to audiences about an issue. Before moving full speed ahead, determine whether the benefits and costs of creating a video PSA are appropriate for your organization and cause.
- 2. Identify your topic.** Pinpoint the mental health or substance misuse topic your organization wants to focus on.
- 3. Develop the key messages you want your audience to absorb.** Are there current events or news stories that make some topics particularly relevant?
- 4. Research the topic.** Make sure that any data or claims you plan to include in the PSA are backed by research and evidence.
- 5. Identify your audience.** Clarify whom the PSA's main message is for. Researching and understanding what this audience cares about can help target your message and final product.
- 6. Determine the distribution method and "hook."** Think about how the PSA will be distributed or viewed, such as through local and national TV channels, YouTube, or your organization's website, or at a special event. Particularly if you plan to contact TV stations, consider what makes your topic newsworthy and important to the media. What will make the producer say, "I can't let this PSA slip through my fingers"?
- 7. Create an outline.** Write down the major points you want to convey in the PSA and start to structure the flow of the video. Also, decide on an appropriate length for the PSA. Typically, they are 30 or 60 seconds long. Fifteen-second PSAs may be more appropriate if your main distribution method will be social media channels.
- 8. Write a script.** Write the narration and dialogue for the PSA. Use simple, conversational language. Keep your sentences concise and to the point. Read your script aloud and time its length to make sure you're on target. It also may be helpful to create a script with two columns: one for the video's audio content, and one to describe visuals that accompany the audio. Even if your PSA doesn't feature anyone speaking, you'll still want to write any text that will appear on screen and create storyboards to organize the flow of text and images.
- 9. Film and produce the video.** Your organization may have an in-house production team, or you may need to research and contact an outside production team that can help film and polish your PSA. If you plan to create a PSA for TV distribution, using a professional video production vendor is recommended.

10. **Distribute your PSA.** Upload it online, share it through social media, or unveil it at a community-wide event! If you partner with other organizations, bring them on board to help promote the PSA. If not, identify organizations that focus on the topic of your PSA and ask them to help spread the word about the video.
11. **If you're interested in airing your PSA on TV,** gather information about which channels and programs would be the best fit for your topic and message. Then, contact the TV station by phone or email, and briefly explain the purpose and message of your PSA and why the topic is relevant to the particular station or program. If the station is interested, follow up by sending the PSA to them in their preferred format (e.g., digital file attached to an email or saved on a disk).

Sample Video PSAs

The following videos are great examples of video PSAs that highlight the importance of health and wellness.



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) "**Can't Be Seen**" PSA about seeking professional help to detect and treat a mental illness (2021).



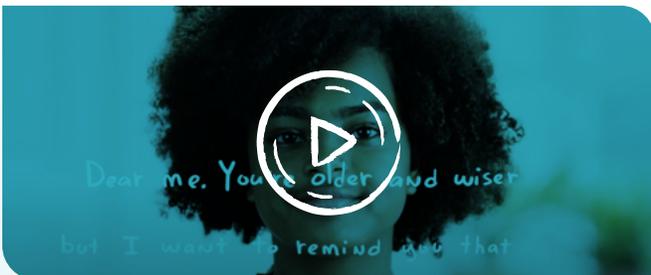
SAMHSA's "**Seven Generations | Prevent Suicide**" about overcoming silence and the stigma surrounding mental health to seek help (2019).



SAMHSA's "**This is Prevention. This is Changing Lives.**" National Prevention Week PSA about those investing in their communities and investing in prevention (2019).



SAMHSA's "**Marijuana Risks: Virtual Assistant**" about one of the many marijuana health risks (2019).



SAMHSA's "**Dear Future Me**" National Prevention Week PSA about preventing substance misuse and promoting positive mental health (2018).



SAMHSA's "**Making Each Day Count**" National Prevention Week PSA about preventing substance misuse and promoting positive mental health (2017).





SAMHSA's "Talk. They Hear You." "Keeping Our Kids Safe" PSA about underage drinking and misuse of prescription pain medication (2018).



SAMHSA's Recovery Month "Voices for Recovery" PSA about words of encouragement from individuals in recovery and those seeking help (2018).



SAMHSA's Prevention of Substance Abuse and Mental Illness Video PSA Contest winner, "I Am More Than Meets the Eye" (2011).



SAMHSA's "What a Difference a Friend Makes | Tic Tac" PSA about promotion of positive mental health (2010).



SAMHSA's "We Can Help Us" campaign PSA about suicide prevention (2010).