



Above the Influence

Effective and Relevant to Youth, ONDCP's Revitalized 'Above the Influence' Campaign Supports Prevention Efforts of Communities Across the Country

The Redesigned Media Campaign

Following extensive consultation with experts in the fields of health communications and drug prevention, ONDCP has implemented a new multi-tiered vision and broader "Above the Influence" (ATI) messaging. The enhancement sought to better align the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (Campaign) with the prevention principles of the National Drug Control Strategy to provide sound information to young people about the dangers of drug use and strengthen efforts to prevent drug use in communities.



The Campaign re-launched the ATI youth brand with broad prevention messaging at the national level – including television, print and Internet advertising – as well as more targeted efforts at the local level. Since the re-design, results from the Campaign's year-round tracking study of teens showed a significant increase in teens' awareness of ATI messages.

More important, teens who were aware of or interacted with ATI had significantly stronger anti-drug beliefs than teens who were not aware of or did not interact with ATI.

Redesigned Campaign Engages Communities Directly

To foster participation at the community level, the Campaign has partnered with more than 40 youth-serving organizations in over 20 communities across the country and provided technical assistance and training to over 500 community organizations through conference workshops and webinars, with the objectives of:

- (1) Actively engaging youth at the local level to allow them to inform and inspire the Campaign;
- (2) Providing local youth-serving organizations with a recognized, national platform to further their specific goals and initiatives; and
- (3) Providing localized advertising – including posters and bus shelter ads featuring artwork created by teens and customized banners in 1,150 high schools – across all of the 20+ partner communities to generate additional awareness.

ONDCP seeks to foster healthy individuals and safe communities by effectively leading the Nation's effort to reduce drug use and its consequences.

Campaign partners include local chapters and affiliates representing Drug-Free Community grantees, the Boys and Girls Club of America, the YMCA (or Y), Girl's Inc., ASPIRA (a national Hispanic organization dedicated to developing the educational and leadership capacity of Hispanic youth), Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), the National Organization for Youth Safety (NOYS), and the Partnership at Drugfree.org.

Campaign Effectiveness

National-level ATI Campaign Shown to be Effective

Evidence for the effectiveness of the "Above the Influence" Campaign has appeared in several recently published independent research studies, including an analysis published online by the peer-reviewed journal *Prevention Science* that concluded, **"exposure to the ONDCP (ATI) campaign predicted reduced marijuana use."**¹

The analysis, funded through a grant by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), showed that youth who reported exposure to the ATI Campaign were less likely to begin use of marijuana than those not exposed to the Campaign – a finding consistent with the Campaign's own year-round Youth Ad Tracking Survey results.

Another study, published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in March 2011,² provides **"evidence that greater exposure to the Above the Influence Campaign is significantly associated with reduced marijuana usage."** Specifically, this research found lower rates of past-month and lifetime marijuana use among 8th grade girls who had greater exposure to the ATI Campaign's anti-drug advertisements. Positive findings for early adolescent teens in this study are consistent with other data showing stronger effects for this age group, including research by "truth," the national tobacco prevention campaign conducted by the American Legacy Foundation.³

Implementation of the Campaign's ATI Tier Two initiative (a community-level effort centered on youth-serving organizations conducting "Above the Influence" activities with youth) has been underway since the fall of 2010 and is designed to amplify the effects of the national ATI Campaign. The Tier Two initiative also has been evaluated recently and has shown positive results (see below).

ATI is Valuable to Communities

Community partners have embraced the ATI Campaign and have used the ATI activities as a new way to engage youth in a dialogue about the negative effects of substance use. ATI community partners have used the ATI Campaign as a valuable asset to which they can anchor their individual youth substance abuse prevention programs, thereby furthering their respective youth-serving missions.

¹ Slater, et al (2011), "Assessing Media Campaigns Linking Marijuana Non-Use with Autonomy and Aspirations: 'Be Under Your Own Influence' and ONDCP's 'Above the Influence'," *Prevention Science*, Volume 12, Number 1, 12-22.

² Carpenter and Pechmann (2011), "Exposure to the Above the Influence Antidrug Advertisements and Adolescent Marijuana Use in the United States, 2006-2008," *American Journal of Public Health*, published online.

³ Farrelly, et al (2005), "Evidence of a dose-response relationship between "truth" antismoking ads and youth smoking prevalence," *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(3), 425-431.

**Coalition of Behavioral Health Services
(a Drug Free Communities grantee in
Houston, Texas)**

Teens from the Coalition of Behavior Health Services conducted a week of “Above the Influence” activities during a local art festival, including the “Tag It” activity, creation of an ATI art mural that traveled to various Houston-area locations, teen panel discussions, and a free concert by a local hip-hop dance group.



Houston-area teen girls participating in the "Tag It" activity creatively demonstrate how they are "above peer pressure."

“We want our teens to develop what we call ‘influence literacy,’ which means having a clear understanding of those people, places, and things in their lives that influence them in a positive way toward their goals and dreams, and those people, places, and things — such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs — that are negative influences which can derail their personal dreams.”

—Sandy Olson, executive director of the Coalition of Behavioral Health Services and the Partnership for a Drug-Free Spring Branch

**Kent County Prevention Coalition
(a Drug Free Communities grantee in
Grand Rapids, Michigan)**

Teens from the Kent County Prevention Coalition took on the challenge of making a movie discussing the negative pressures and influences in their lives, and how they rise above them. The 30-minute movie premiered at a local Kent County movie theater. Teens used the ATI Toolkit as a guide for the activities and discussions captured in the movie.



Michigan teens pose for a picture prior to doing the “Tag It” activity that would later be used in their 30-minute “Above the Influence” film.

“To have the national support through ATI, and to be part of something larger than just your community, has been great. It’s allowed us to open doors and develop strong partnerships that have blossomed.”

—Shannon Cohen, Program Director, Kent County Prevention Coalition

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Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club (Bronx, NY)

After completing the ATI art project, Yolanda Brisbane-Baird, unit director at the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club, challenged her youth to form their own ATI team to design ATI-themed events throughout the year. ATI-related activities included: (1) a Valentine's Teen Party, where teens featured an alcohol-free teen bar; teens who submitted their ATI artwork were admitted for \$1 versus \$5; (2) a "Stop Bullying – Speak Up" town hall meeting sponsored by Cartoon Network and Cablevision. Youth conducted the ATI "Tag It" activity before the event and showcased their "tags" during the town hall meeting; and (3) a large wall display in the lobby of the club dedicated to ATI, with a new ATI theme each month.



Daryl (standing at center, right) of the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club stands proudly next to her ATI artwork, which was made into posters for her club.

In an evaluation of the Campaign's community-level efforts, community partners reported that local ATI activities were useful to their organizations in meeting their missions to serve youth. Further, the ATI Campaign activities continue to be replicated in local communities around the country, with roughly three-quarters of community partners saying they would highly recommend ATI activities to other youth-serving organizations.

ATI community-level activities are having a measured impact on youth as well. Not only did 91 percent of teen participants favorably rate the ATI activities, but teens' perceptions of the risks associated with drug and alcohol use also increased after participating in ATI activities.

