From Idea to Impact:

A “How-To” Guide for Building Public Health Social Media Campaigns Using the *Talk Early, Talk Often* Initiative



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We have no financial interests or relationships to disclose.

Meet the Team



PREVENTION

Mike Rugg

Subject Matter Expertise

- Youth substance use prevention
- Evidence-based messaging
- Parent/caregiver engagement



COMMUNICATIONS

Thalita Campelo

Strategy + Creative

- Audience-centered messaging
- Visual identity & design
- Social media strategy



EPIDEMIOLOGY

Pooja Shelke

Data + Evaluation

- Community data
- Social media analytics
- Measuring reach & engagement



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Describe** the key components of a successful public health social media campaign, including audience identification, messaging development, and branding.
- **Explain** how community engagement strategies (e.g., focus groups, surveys, and ambassador programs) inform campaign development and support implementation from concept through launch.
- **Identify** key strategies from the *Talk Early. Talk Often.* campaign to design, adapt, and evaluate social media initiatives within their own communities.

Public Health Communications

- Public health communications combines evidence-based information with marketing strategies to create messages that are clear, relevant, and actionable.

- Effective campaigns require intentional planning: Who are we trying to reach? What do we want them to know or do? How can we best connect with them?



Marketing 101: *The right message + the right audience + the right platforms = greater community impact.*

CMSAPC

Central MetroWest Substance Awareness & Prevention Collaborative (CMSAPC)

- CMSAPC is a regional, grant-funded coalition compromising representatives from
  - Schools
  - Parents
  - Youth-serving organizations
  - Faith-based services
  - Local governments
  - Substance use prevention groups
- CMSAPC serves the Central MetroWest communities of Ashland, Hudson, Marlborough, Natick, Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough.

IDENTIFY THE NEED

What the Existing Data Showed

- CMSAPC reviewed quantitative data from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (2018 and 2021) to understand youth substance use, mental health, risk and protective factors, and disparities across the region.

- Also analyzed qualitative data which included 18 key informant interviews and 11 focus groups across seven communities.

- The overall assessment identified parental attitudes, caregiver involvement, and youth emotional regulation as key factors informing the prevention strategies.

4.9x Middle school students reporting high stress were 4.9 times more likely to have ever used marijuana.

1.7x High school students reporting high stress were 1.7 times more likely to report past 30-day alcohol and marijuana use.

Action Planning Retreat

- CMSAPC, Trendline and Bright Solutions hosted an Action Planning Retreat for all 7 CMSAPC communities

- The retreat prioritized broad representation including:
  - Coalition and community members representing key sectors
  - Youth, parents/caregivers, schools, law enforcement, public health, and youth-serving organizations

- The goal of the retreat was not simply to identify which substance had the highest use rate, but **to understand what was driving youth substance use and what CMSAPC could realistically influence.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Uncertainty:** Parents were unsure how to discuss cannabis with youth.
- **Low Confidence:** Most parents felt uncomfortable initiating conversations with youth.
- **Limited Resources:** Parents lacked guidance and tools to get started on having conversations with youth.

⭐ This is what our campaign had to tackle.

FROM DATA TO STRATEGY

Why Social Media?



- **Meet parents where they are** through multiple media channels without requiring meetings or trainings.
- **Fit into busy lives** by integrating prevention messages into the spaces parents already use.
- **Reinforce key messages** across social, print, audio, and community resources.
- **Reach families across communities** with consistent messaging designed to shift attitudes around youth cannabis use.

LISTEN BEFORE YOU CREATE

Community Engagement at Every Stage

Don't Assume You Know What Will Work!

LISTEN
(before development)

- **Hosted focus groups** with parents, caregivers, and community members.
- **Used surveys** to gather broader community input.
- **Met people in their own community** spaces to understand their needs and concerns.

TEST & CREATE
(during development)

- **Tested campaign** slogans and messaging.
- **Gathered feedback** on logos, visuals, and social media graphics.
- **Refined messaging** and design based on community input.

LEARN & REFINE
(after launch)

- **Continued gathering** community feedback.
- **Monitored responses** and social media engagement.
- **Used insights to improve** future content and campaign decisions.

BUILD THE CAMPAIGN

Building The Campaign

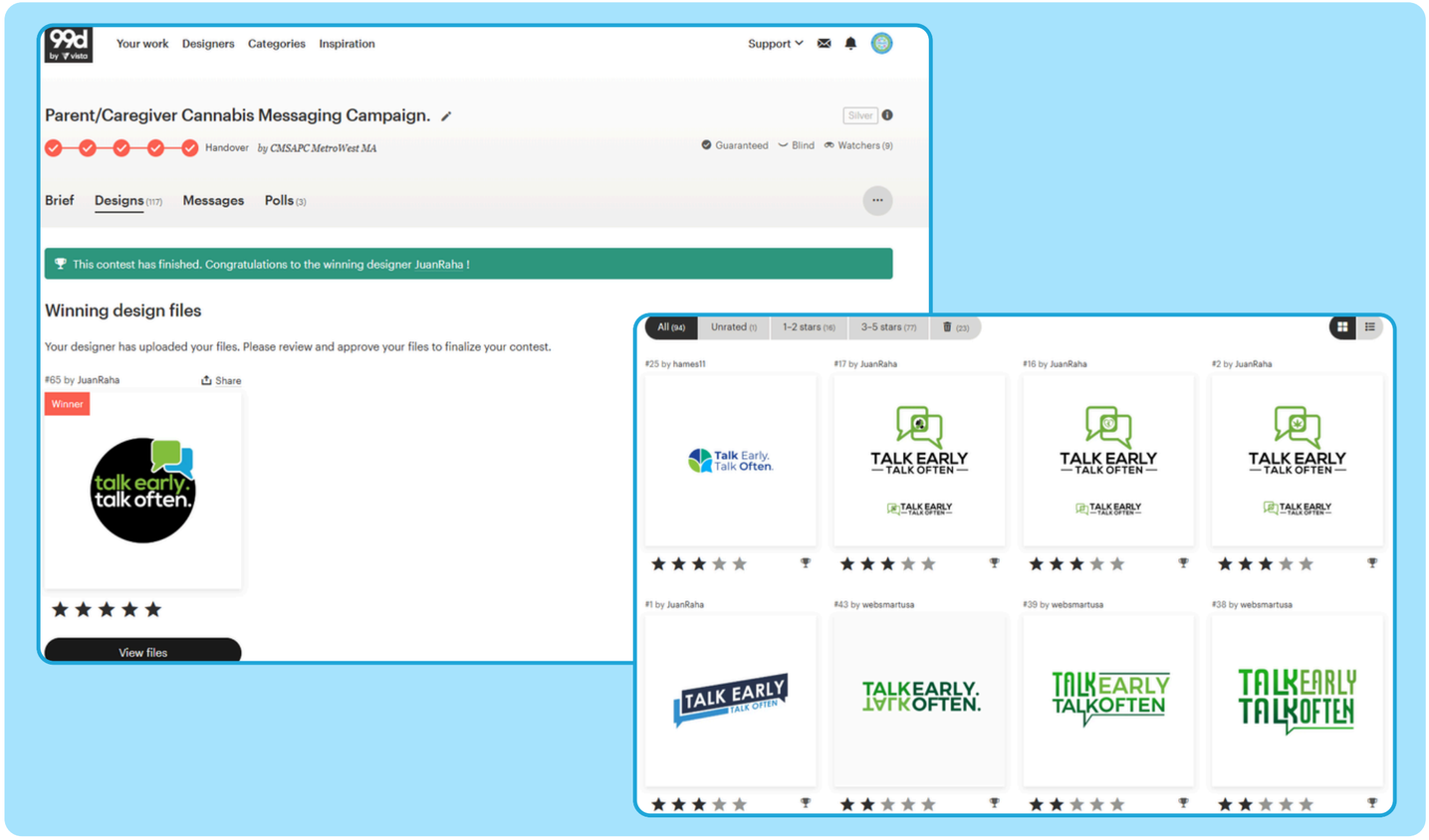
Logo & Branding 01

Website Toolkit 02

Pre-Launch Planning 03

1. Logo & Branding

- Partnered with 99designs to develop the campaign's logo and visual identity.
- Explored 100+ logo concepts, narrowing the options to seven finalists.
- Gathered feedback from key stakeholders, including:
  - Internal staff
  - CMSAPC members
  - Community members
- Refined the visual identity based on feedback to create branding that resonated with our target audience.

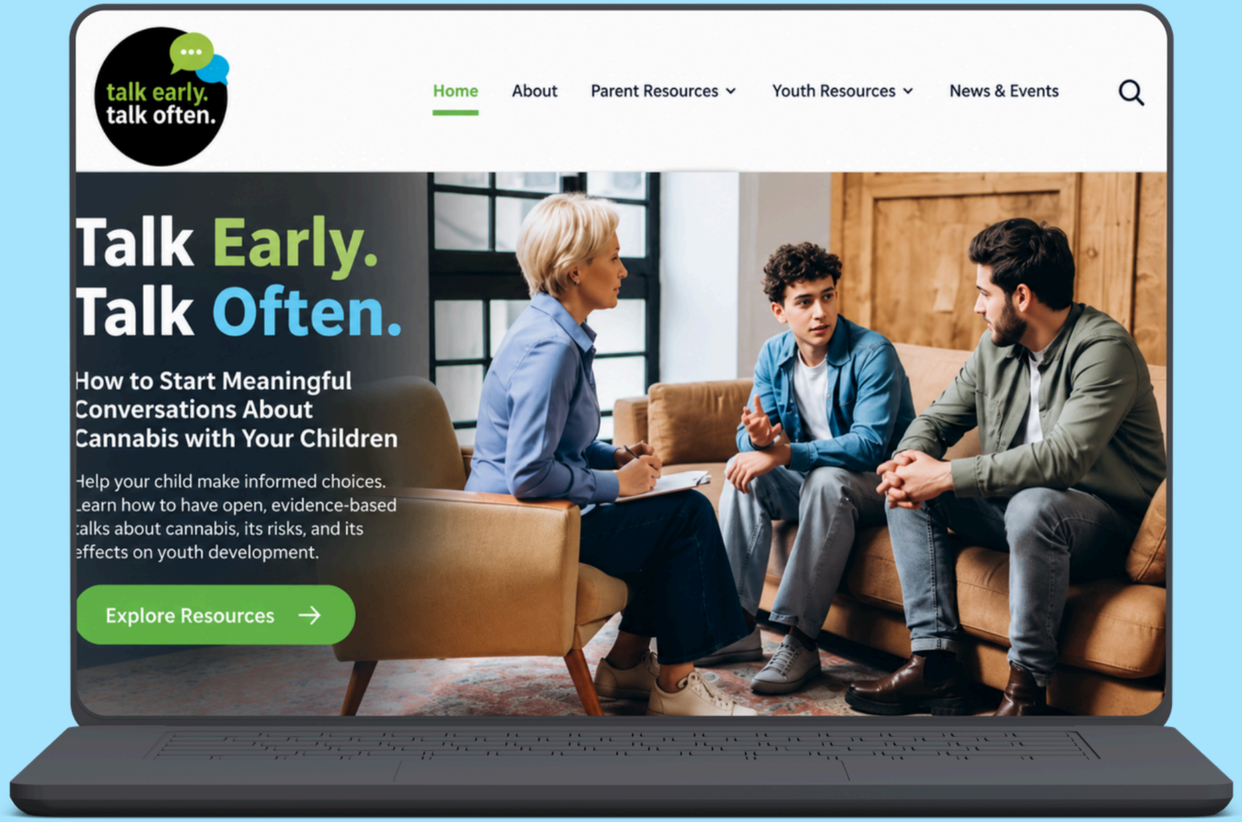


100+ Logo concepts → **7** Finalists → **Community** Feedback → **Final** Logo!

2. Website Toolkit

- We went beyond sharing information to provide parents and caregivers with practical tools and confidence to start conversations about cannabis.

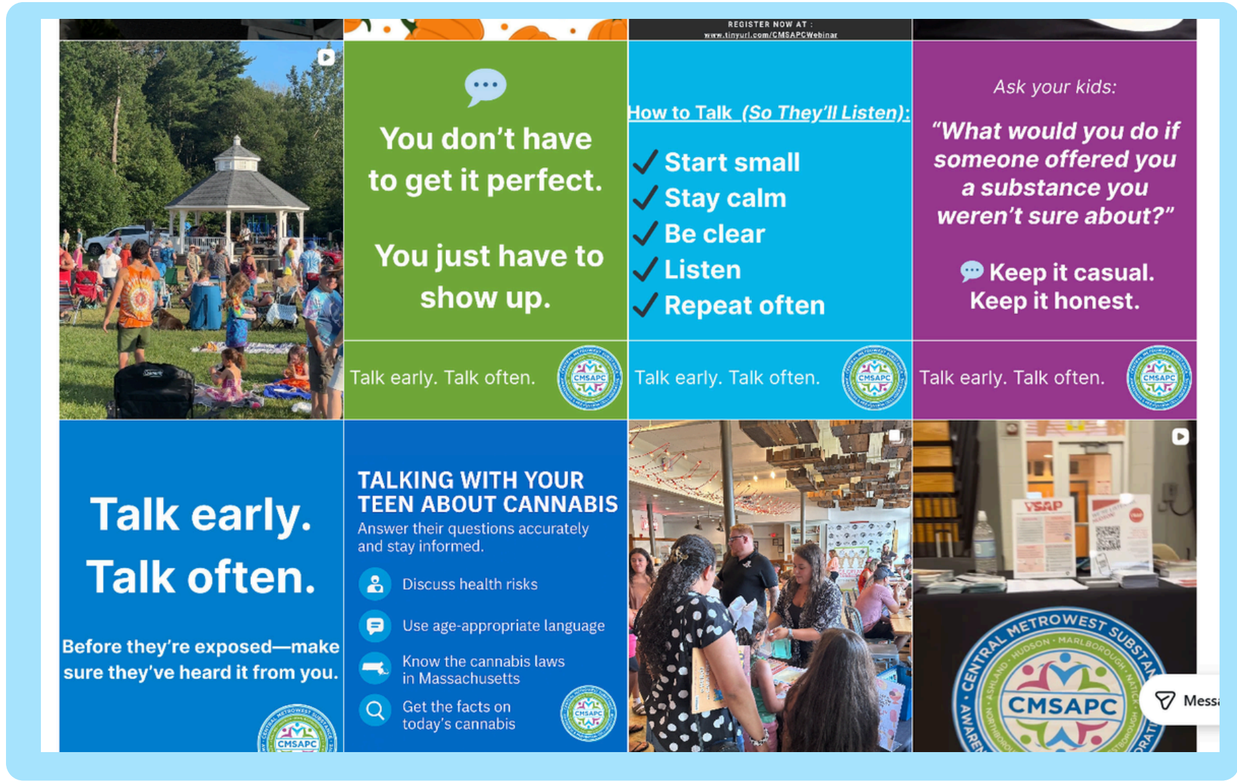
- Distinct website features include:
  - Storybook
  - Conversation Tips
  - Evidence-Based Responses
  - Myths vs. Facts
  - Brain Function Tool
  - Youth quotes



https://cmsapc.org/our-work/talk-early-talk-often/

3. Pre-Launch Planning

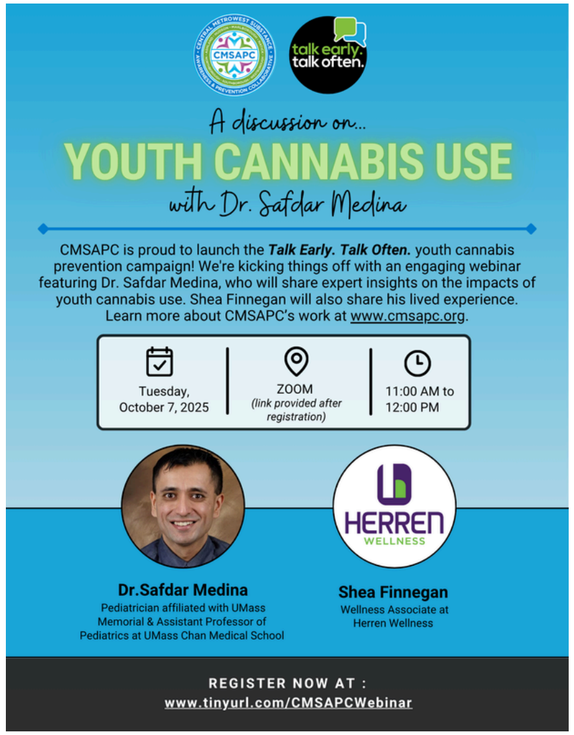
1. Established a launch date for the social media campaign.
2. Introduced teaser content on Instagram to build awareness and anticipation.
3. Sparked curiosity and interest ahead of the official launch.
4. Began engaging parents and caregivers early to build momentum before the full campaign rollout.

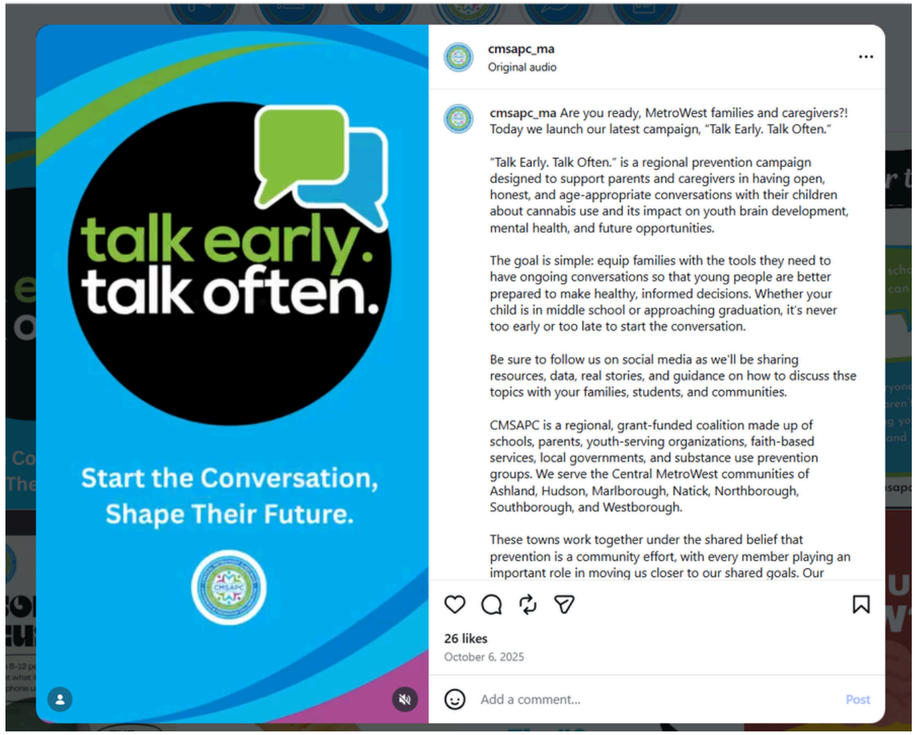


LAUNCH THE CAMPAIGN

Official Campaign Launch

Launched on:
OCTOBER 7, 2025





- **Virtual Launch Webinar**
  Hosted webinar to introduce the capaign, share key messages, and highlight available resources.
- **Coordinated Social Media Rollout**
  Launched campaign content across Instagram, Facebook, and other community channels.
- **Reached Parents & Caregivers**
  Began engaging families with pratical tools and evidence-based information.
- **Built Momentum**
  The launch marked the start of a broader community effort to encourage early, ongoing conversations about cannabis with youth.

EXPAND YOUR REACH

Beyond The Social Media Feed

Our campaign extended beyond online posts through community relationships, trusted messengers, and local visibility.

1. VIDEOS/ REELS
2. BRAND AMBASSADORS
3. DIGITAL BILLBOARD & PRINT SIGNAGE
4. SPONSORSHIPS

VIDEOS/REELS

- Short-form video content was producing the best numbers on social media.

- Reels/videos included:
  - Interviews with trusted, well-known community members at local events
  - Interviews with CMSAPC members
    - 15-20min interviews about prevention & campaign that we shortened into one-minute segments & posted with captions as reels

- Video recorded interview with local news channel.



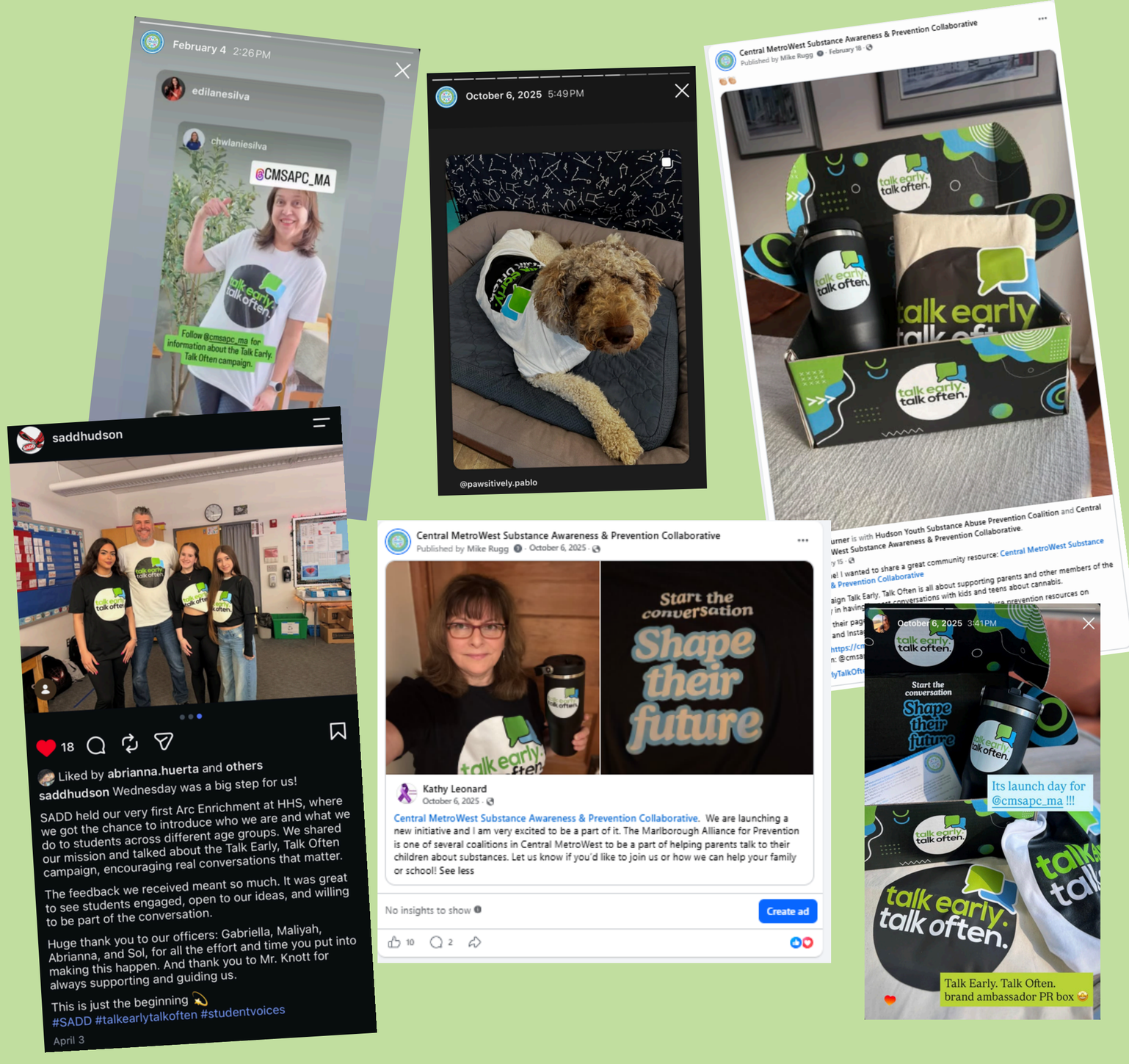






BRAND AMBASSADORS

- Sent customized PR boxes to selected, trusted community members.
- Encouraged ambassadors to share the campaign on their social media platforms.
- Provided campaign materials and information to make sharing easy and accurate.
- Leveraged trusted community voices to expand reach and build credibility.



DIGITAL BILLBOARD & PRINT SIGNAGE

- Digital billboards promoted the campaign along the bike trail and at the downtown Armory building, reaching areas with high foot traffic.

- Community signage displayed campaign posters at a local baseball field to increase visibility.

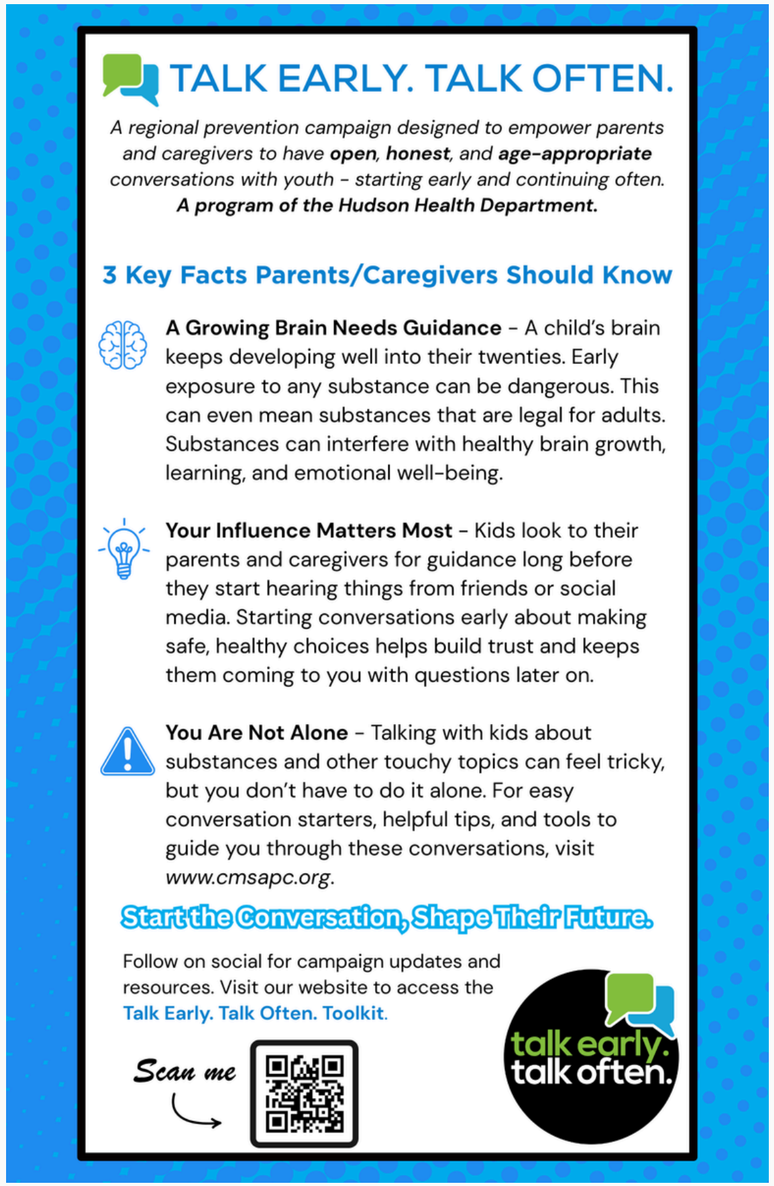
- Reinforced campaign messaging in everyday community spaces, reaching audiences who may not engage with us on social media.





SPONSORSHIPS

- **School Event Sponsorship:** Sponsored a DJ and hosted an information booth at a middle school dance.
- **Community Event Sponsorship:** Sponsored a hole at the RF Wood Foundation golf tournament.
- **Strategic Outreach:** Used local sponsorships to increase campaign visibility, strengthen community relationships, and reach families in familiar settings.



Campaign advertisement featured at the school event.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- **Expanding Your Reach:** Connecting with audiences beyond your existing social media followers.
- **Building Trust & Credibility:** Using familiar faces, community partners, and trusted messengers to strengthen connections.
- **Meeting People Where They Are:** Sharing messages across digital platforms and everyday community spaces.
- **Increasing Engagement:** Using different formats and outreach strategies to encourage interaction and participation.
- **Creating Multiple Touchpoints:** Reinforcing campaign messages through repeated exposure across different channels.



MEASURE & ADAPT

WHY WE TRACK THE DATA

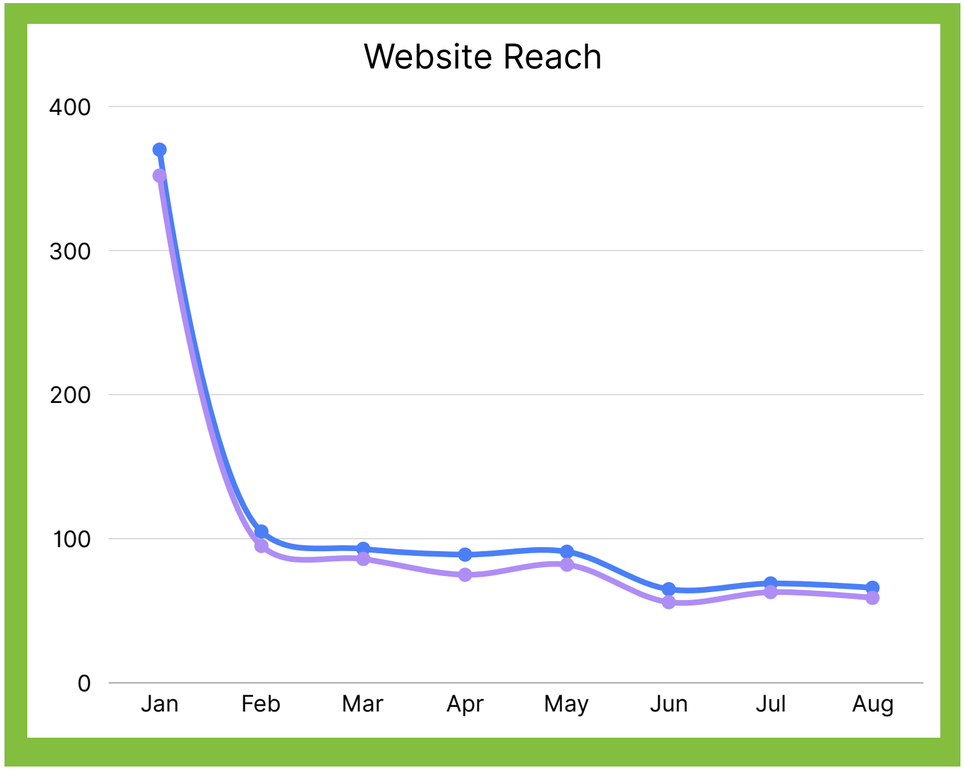
TETO is not just about creating resources and putting them online. We want to understand how people find, engage with, and respond to our content and use what we learn to improve the campaign.

What We Measure:	What It Helps Us Understand:
Reach and views	Where our content is reaching people and how far messages spread.
Engagement and shares	Which topics and formats are worth building on.
Questions and feedback	What concerns or misconceptions we should address.
Website and webinar activity	Whether people explore additional resources and what may inform future outreach.

Our goal: Use data to learn, adapt, and connect more parents and caregivers with useful resources.

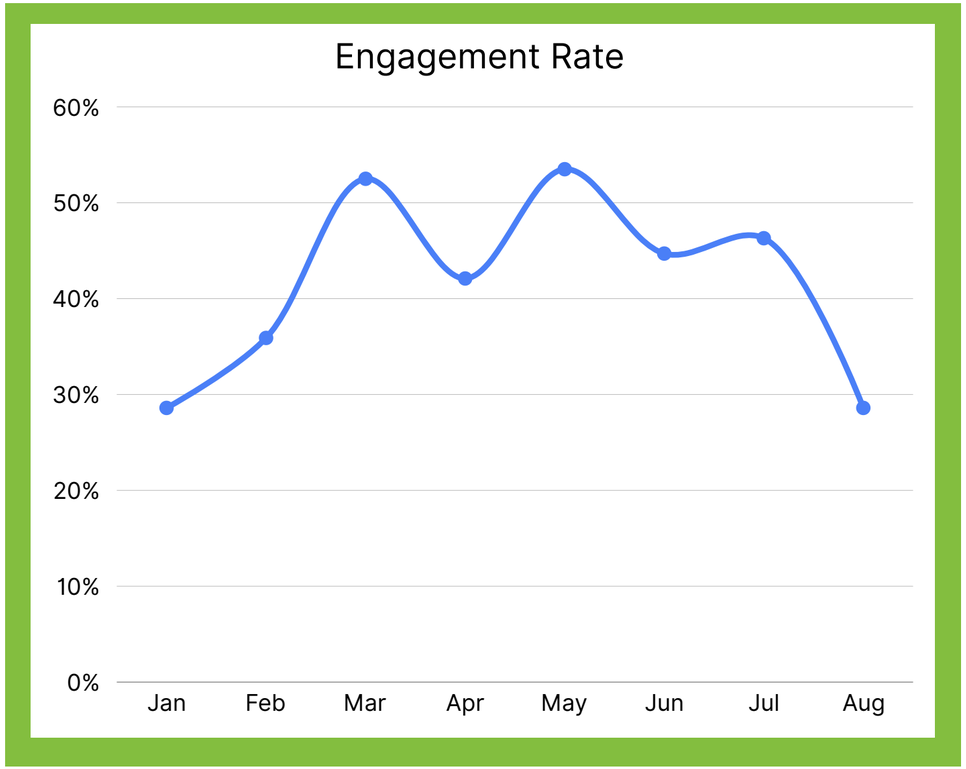
Reach and Engagement Didn't Always Tell the Same Story.

Website Reach



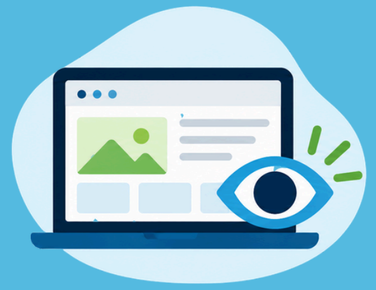
Engagement

*(*More than 10 seconds spent on page)*



Higher website traffic didnt always mean stonger engagement!

Website Data:



21%

of **all website page views** were on the TETO page.



44%

of **total website engagement time** came from the TETO page.

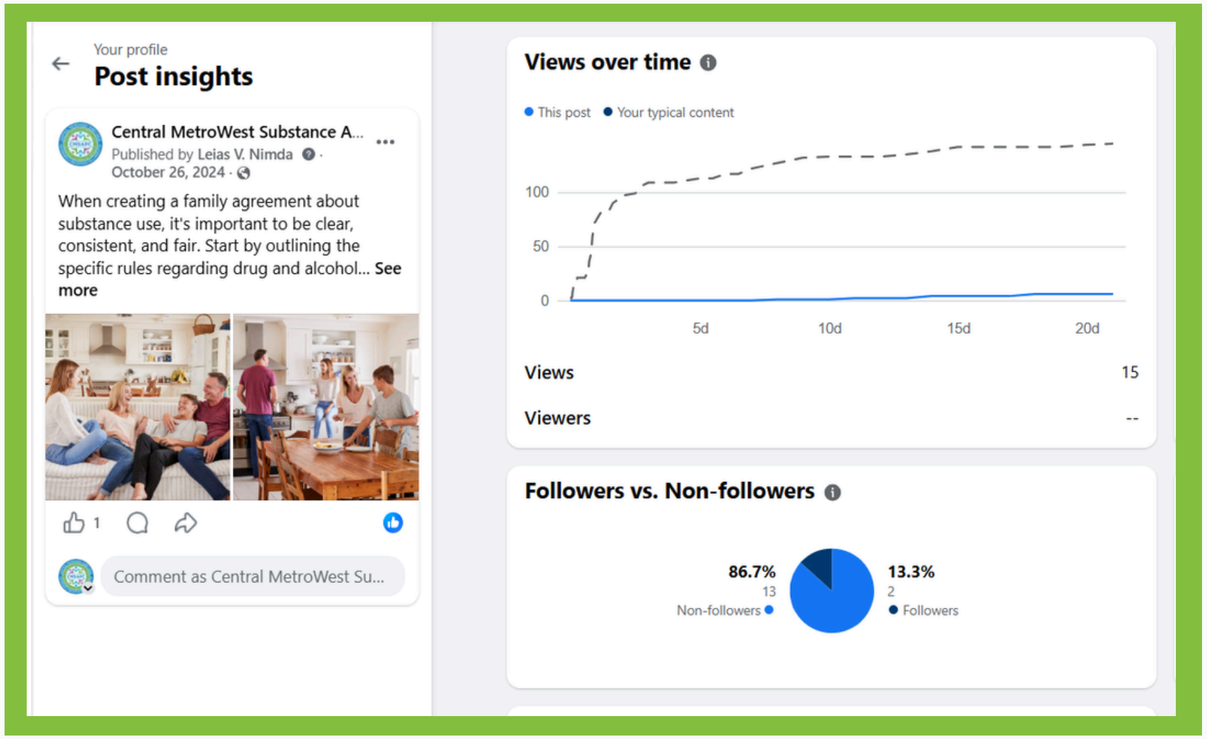


3x

as much **time spent** on the TETO page compared with other CMSAPC pages.

Meta Data:

BEFORE THE CAMPAIGN:



AFTER THE CAMPAIGN:



What We've Learned So Far

1 Practical Content Resonated

- Tuesday Tips averaged 132 people reached per post.
- "Use open-ended questions" reached 480 people on Facebook and 262 on Instagram.

2 Partnerships Expanded Reach

- Posts featuring community members and partners generated engagement.
- Municipal website referrals created additional opportunities to connect families with resources.

3 Timing & Distribution Matter

- More campaign posts didn't automatically lead to more website visits.
- April's traffic peak coincided with in-person tabling events.

4 Keep Evaluating

- Track which content formats and partner channels perform best.
- Explore whether caregivers feel more confident starting conversations with their children.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Start with a clearly identified need.



Know your audience and involve them early.



Leverage the relationships you already have.



Measure, learn, and adapt.



Make sharing part of your strategy.

QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU!

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talk early. talk often.

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