

Tier I

Hosting a Prevention Speaker



HOSTING A PREVENTION SPEAKER EVENT: BrainAbouts suggests hosting prevention speakers 1-2 times during each school year for the entire student body or for a targeted grade. School assemblies, morning advisories/homeroom classes, healthy classes, or video presentations can be used to ensure all students participate. Follow the suggested guidelines below to achieve a positive student impact.

SPEAKER CHARACTERISTICS: BrainAbouts recommends the following types of speakers:

RECOVERY SPEAKER: A recovery speaker is in recovery from alcohol abuse, drug addiction, an eating disorder, gambling problem, video game addiction, mental illness, or other issue. The research indicates a greater student impact when the speaker is closer in age or has undergone a problem that is relatable to students. However, the research also indicates that students may think they can engage in the behavior for awhile and then just stop, like people in recovery have done. So, it is important for the speaker to discuss the negative outcomes associated with the issue (e.g., possible death, academic issues, family problems, legal consequences, etc.) in addition to the positive outcomes they achieved in recovery.

- Recovery speakers should have a minimum of 3-5 years in recovery with as much abstinence from the behavior.
- To vet, ask recovery speakers for references such as their counselor, sponsor, or parent to verify their recovery status.
- Students, faculty members, or other young people can be recovery speakers if they meet the recovery time qualifications, and they are psychologically appropriate to speak in front of the student body. Vet their message and discuss possible outcomes of speaking in front of their own student body or other students their age.
- Obtain parental permission for all student or underage youth speakers.

ABSTINENCE SPEAKER: An abstinence speaker has chosen not to engage in a risky behavior for a specific reason. This may be a student, a parent, a faculty member, or community member who has unique experience regarding a specific high-risk topic. BrainAbouts recommends balancing recovery and abstinence speakers throughout the school year to encourage consideration of both perspectives.

- Student leaders who possess confidence and a healthy sense of agency may be good candidates to speak about why they have chosen not to engage in an activity. Research indicates such speakers can exert powerful positive peer influence if their status is well respected.
- Vetting should include interviewing their peers, parents, and obtaining agreement that the student will continue to uphold the values they represent after the event.

EXPERT SPEAKER: Expert speakers possess knowledge about a topic or skill. Parent educators, counselors, social workers, social/emotional skills trainers, comedians, theatrical shows, videos, etc. can be used.

- Appropriate vetting of qualifications and recommendations should be completed.
- Expert speakers should have experience speaking with youth and information should be developmentally appropriate.

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HOSTING THE EVENT: Plan your Tier I speaker events well in advance. Enlist your BrainAbouts Student, Faculty, and Parent Engagement groups to plan, organize, and volunteer during the event. Use this checklist:

In the summer or at the beginning of the school year:

- ☐ Reserve auditorium, library, lunchroom, or other space and technology needed for the event.
- ☐ Decide, vet, and obtain appropriate permissions, and book the speaker or event.
- ☐ Sign up vendors, request estimates or invoices, obtain budget permission for any associated costs.
- ☐ Create marketing materials for the event (flyers, handouts, posts, articles, etc.).

Two-Three months prior:

- ☐ Begin advertising for the event (add info to website, post in school/community newspaper, hang posters, lay out flyers, morning announcements, add to marquee, send parent and faculty emails, etc).
- ☐ Meet with student, faculty, and/or parent organizers to plan event logistics.

One week prior:

- ☐ Confirm speaker, send logistics and parking information, and designate a speaker 'handler' to greet them or send video access information.
- ☐ Meet with student, faculty, and/or parent organizers to review event logistics.
- ☐ Create a question bank of appropriate questions to ask speaker.
- ☐ Send faculty email or paper instructions for the schedule of activities and event logistics including the discussion handouts to be used in-class after the event.

Day of event:

- ☐ Set student behavioral expectations and event procedures in the morning announcements.
- ☐ Check sound/video equipment and designate a troubleshooter to handle technology issues.
- ☐ Designate volunteers, faculty, and administration throughout event space to monitor student behavior.
- ☐ **After the event**, positively reward students for good behavior, good questions, and school spirit. Conduct student discussions in-class and email discussion handouts and video recording of event to parents.

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