



OPIOID SERIES

CONVERSATION TIPS WHEN DISCUSSING OPIOIDS

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation created a series of resources on opioids to help facilitate healthy, productive conversations between law enforcement mentors and at-risk youth in the *Badges for Baseball* program about dealing with the issues surrounding drug use. The “Conversation Tips When Discussing Opioids” resource includes suggestions on how mentors should approach the conversation of drugs and opioids with at-risk youth in the program. These conversations should happen organically, and not be done as a scripted lecture which might scare, excite, or pique their interest. These interactions should be spontaneous and allow kids to speak freely as they would with a trusted adult mentor.

1. Keep the conversation natural, calm, casual and positive.
2. Begin by asking youth what they think about drugs in a casual way.
3. Remain open and do not push the conversation if youth seem uncomfortable or not interested.
4. Praise the good, and express concern (not judgement).
5. Ask questions, listen, and repeat back what is said.
6. Keep to facts, rather than horror stories, and try brainstorming ideas for specific situations like how to contact an adult in a risky situation.
7. Show you care about the child’s health, well-being and success.
8. Discuss how drugs could get in the way of goals.
9. Plan to have many short talks.
10. Be open, do not lecture, and do not exaggerate.^(1, 2, 3, 4)

References

1. Vermont Department of Health. *How can I prevent teen substance misuse problems?* ParentUp. Published n.d. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://parentupvt.org/how-do-i-prevent#Talk-About-Substance-Use>
2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Talking to Kids about Alcohol and Other Drugs: 5 Conversation Goals.*
3. Australian Government Department of Health. *Talking to a young person about alcohol and other drugs. Positive Choices.* <https://positivechoices.org.au/parents/talking-to-a-young-person-about-alcohol-and-drugs>
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Surgeon General’s report on alcohol, drugs, and health.* Published online 2016. <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/surgeon-generals-report.pdf>



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CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR OPIOIDS

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation created a series of resources on opioids to help facilitate healthy, productive conversations between law enforcement mentors and at-risk youth in the *Badges for Baseball* program about dealing with the issues surrounding drug use. The “Conversation Starters for Opioids” resource helps mentors to start conversations about difficult topics such as opioids and drug use with kids between the ages of 9 to 14. These conversations should happen organically, and not be done as a scripted lecture which might scare, excite, or pique their interest. Each child is different and so each conversation may be different too.

What are opioids?

- Have you heard about opioids?
- Where or from whom?
- What do you think about opioids?
- How do think they get into the body?
- What would you still like to know about opioids?

What happens to you when you use opioids?

- How do you think you would feel if you took them?
- How long would the feelings last?
- Would they change the way you act?
- Do you think they would change your body?
- What kind of problems could happen if you used opioids?
- Why do you think people have problems with opioids?
- Have you heard of dopamine?

Why do people use opioids?

- What could you do if your friend was using opioids?
- What could you do if someone offered you opioids?
- What have you seen about opioid use in the (movies, TV shows, on the internet, Tik Tok, Snapchat, or other social media)?
- What are your family rules about using opioids or medications?

These conversations should take place between a mentee and mentor. Focus on building trust so you can have an open and honest conversation. Be patient as it may take a couple of weeks to build that trust, especially if you only get to see them during program hours.

Note: All data in this Opioid Fact sheet was compiled with guidance and assistance from the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and A Division for Advancing Prevention & Treatment (ADAPT).