

ANNUAL PSA CONTEST



BROUGHT TO YOU BY CAPE ASSIST +
THE CAPE MAY COUNTY HEALTHY COMMUNITY COALITION



POSTER

VIDEO

ART

WRITING

CREATE | INFORM | INSPIRE

CONTEST OPEN TO ALL CAPE MAY COUNTY STUDENTS IN GRADES K-12TH
VISIT WWW.CMCHCC.ORG/PSA FOR RULES + CONTEST SUBMISSION

PSA SUBMISSIONS DUE: FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026



MULTIPLE WINNERS

EACH WINNER AND ONE GUEST WILL BE INVITED TO
CAPE ASSIST'S AWARDS BREAKFAST WHERE THEY WILL BE
RECOGNIZED. THE BREAKFAST WILL BE HELD ON
FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2026, AT THE ICONA AVALON, 8:30AM-10:30AM.



Cape Assist

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2026 Public Service Announcement Contest

Cape Assist and the Cape May County Healthy Community Coalition (HCC) are announcing a Public Service Announcement Contest!

HCC, a community initiative of Cape Assist, is striving to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors for substance misuse among youth in our community. This year's topics will focus on the importance of connection, peer support, and staying drug-free.

- The contest is open to all students in grades K-12 in Cape May County. Younger students may need the help of an adult to discuss and choose a topic.
- Students are invited to create a 60-second video PSA, or a poster/art PSA, or a written PSA (no more than 250 words) on one of the following four topics:
 - Mental Health: It's Okay to Talk About It
 - Why I Choose to Be Drug-Free
 - Don't Puff Away Our Planet
 - Real-Time vs. Screen-Time

Information and idea suggestions are provided for each topic.

Winning PSA entries will be used at Cape Assist functions and workshops and may be chosen to be displayed on Cape Assist's and HCC's social media pages or local radio.

Each winner and one guest will be invited to Cape Assist's Awards Breakfast, where they will be recognized. The breakfast will be held at Icona Avalon on Friday, May 1, 2026, 8:30-10:30am. There will be multiple winners!

- Students' PSA entries should be submitted to www.cmchcc.org/psa
- Parent consent is required with each PSA entry submission.

ENTRIES ARE DUE ON OR BEFORE FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026!

One entry per person or per group. Only up to 5 representatives from group videos may be able to attend the awards breakfast (unfortunately, the space is limited).

A committee from CMC Healthy Community Coalition will select the winning entries based on relevance to the theme, factual information, and creativity.

Good luck to all and thank you for your participation!

Visit www.cmchcc.org/psa for more information and to submit your PSA.

If you have any questions, contact Natalia Leusner – natalia@capeassist.org

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PSA Contest Rules, Requirements, & Eligibility

Rules & Eligibility:

- The contest is only open to students in grades K-12 residing in Cape May County or enrolled in a school in Cape May County.
- Students must select one of the four topics listed below for their PSA. *Each topic has a description/fact sheet.*
 - Mental Health: It's Okay to Talk About It
 - Why I Choose to Be Drug-Free
 - Don't Puff Away Our Planet
 - Real-Time vs. Screen-Time
- PSA may not contain the following: profanity, nudity, promoting drinking and drug use, death, or violence.
- Submit PSA entry at www.cmchcc.org/psa by the deadline date (**Friday, March 13, 2026**).
- Only one entry per student or group is permitted.
- All entries must be original work & cannot be AI-generated. Clipart/copyright-free elements may be incorporated into art/poster & video submissions.
- Any entries submitted after the deadline or without an entry form will be considered invalid.
- Parent consent is required with each PSA entry submission.

Requirements for video PSA:

- Video PSA will only be accepted in the following formats: MP4, AVI, MOV, WMV.
- Video PSA should be limited to 60 seconds or less.
- PSA must include a title and "produced by" at the beginning or end of the video (this will be included in the 60-second video limit).
- Ensure that background music/noise does not overpower or distract any important speaking parts of the PSA. Actors in the PSA should speak loudly and clearly.
- Check the PSA audio to ensure it is loud and clear at a normal volume level.

Requirements for Poster/Art PSA:

- Poster/Art will only be accepted in the following formats: JPG, JPEG, and PNG.
- Check for spelling and grammar.
- For students submitting a photograph of their meme, poster, or art, please check the lighting and clarity of the photo before submitting.
- Please include first & last name, school, grade, and advisor's name in the back of the poster/art.

Requirements for a written PSA:

- Written PSAs MUST be typed into the contest form (or copied and pasted from a document).
- Written PSAs cannot be a group submission. Only an individual submission.
- Your written PSA should be 250 words or less.

Winners will be chosen by a committee from CMC Healthy Community Coalition based on relevance to theme, factual information, and creativity. Good luck to all and thank you for your participation!

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2026 Public Service Announcement Contest

PSA Topic: Mental Health: It's Ok to Talk about It

In this PSA, we invite you to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and reaching out for help.

A few points to help you generate ideas:

- When someone is suffering, reaching out for help can be hard, but this is the first step to feeling better. According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 1 in 5 teens are experiencing a mental health challenge. Many are struggling in silence.
- Many risk-taking behaviors such as substance use, for example, can start during teenage years as an unhelpful strategy to cope with emotional difficulties and can severely impact a teen's mental and physical well-being.
- Mental health disorders refer to a wide range of mental health conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior. Examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and addictive behaviors.
- It's hard to engage in school when someone's dealing with mental health issues. It's important to recognize and address it.
- Just talking about mental health issues, even to one person, helps break down the stigma. Some teens might be afraid of being judged or of not being taken seriously and don't ask for help. Being a supportive friend and encouraging them to talk to a trusted adult can make a big difference.
- In your PSA, you could also talk about the 2NDFLOOR helpline and the Saluna App (NJ) as resources available to youth and young adults in NJ. Here is some information about them:

2NDFLOOR is a confidential and anonymous helpline for NJ youth and young adults ages 10 to 24. Helpline is available 24/7 - 365 days a year. Problems, questions, or non-life threatening situations: dial or text the youth helpline at 888-222-2228 or download the 2NDFLOOR App. For more information, visit the 2NDFLOOR website <https://www.2ndfloor.org/>

Soluna App is a free, safe, confidential mental health service for New Jersey teens ages 13 to 18. Mental health coaching and counseling, secure peer community, and tools for self-care. <https://solunaapp.com/newjersey/>

*****If someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, call 911 or 988.**

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PSA Topic: Why I Choose to Be Drug-Free

Ideas: In this PSA, you could explore how having **goals** and working toward achieving them plays a big role in making **good decisions** and staying **drug-free**.

In addition to having goals, knowing the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol helps people make good decisions. Below is some information on the risks.

- Drugs and alcohol affect children and adolescents in a much more negative way than adults. It is because the brain of a young person is not fully developed until the age of 25 years old.
- All drugs will affect a person's judgement, ability to form new memories, learning, reaction time, impulse control, and decision-making.

Marijuana

- It is illegal to buy or use marijuana under the age of 21. It is also illegal for adults to provide marijuana products to those who are under 21.
- Marijuana is a mind-altering (psychoactive) drug produced by the Cannabis plant. THC is the main chemical ingredient that produces the psychoactive effect (makes someone 'high').
- THC disrupts the brain's ability to form memories and learn new things.
- Marijuana can have permanent damaging effects on developing brains. It can lower a person's IQ if they use it regularly in their teen years.
- Students who use marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of school.
- Marijuana is highly addictive. 1 in 6 youth marijuana users becomes addicted.
- Frequent marijuana use has been linked to depression, paranoia, and anxiety.
- Playing sports or video games? – marijuana can affect timing, coordination, movement and weaken someone's performance.
- Longtime marijuana users report being less satisfied with their lives, having memory and relationship problems, poorer mental and physical health, and less career success.
- Drivers who test positive for marijuana are over 2 times more likely to be involved in a crash.

Alcohol

- It is illegal to buy or consume alcohol under the age of 21. It is also illegal for adults to provide alcohol to those who are under 21.
- If a person drinks alcohol before the age of 15, they are 5 times more likely to be alcohol dependent than someone who waited until the legal age of 21.
- Alcohol impairs judgment and can lead someone to making decisions they wouldn't normally make.
- Research shows that teens who drink score lower on tests than those who don't and are more likely to perform poorly at school or even drop out of school.
- Alcohol consumption lowers speed, endurance, strength, and concentration - all key factors in an athlete's success.
- One time getting drunk equals 14 days of lost training effects (for sports). One person's individual decision to drink alcohol would affect the entire team.
- Underage drinking can result in other negative consequences such as alcohol poisoning, alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, other injuries, legal problems, etc.
- Alcohol consumption is linked to an increased risk of developing cancer.

Tobacco and Vaping

- The legal age to purchase tobacco or vape products is 21.
- Teenagers who vape and use e-cigarettes (electronic cigarettes) are more likely to try cigarettes and other tobacco products.
- Nicotine in either tobacco or vaping liquids is very addictive.
- A person can start feeling addicted after smoking only a few cigarettes or after smoking or vaping only for a few days. People who start smoking/vaping when they're young have the hardest time quitting.
- There are thousands of toxic chemicals in cigarettes and in vaping products. They affect the health of a person's lungs, and some of the chemicals can cause cancer.
- Teens who smoke have many more colds, coughs, throat and nose problems than those who don't.
- Smoking cigarettes and vaping are major risk factors for a heart attack.
- Smoking causes bad breath, stains teeth and tongue, and helps tartar build up on teeth.
- Teens who smoke or vape are more likely to have panic attacks, anxiety problems, and depression.



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PSA Topic: Don't Puff Away Our Planet

Vaping doesn't just affect someone's health – it harms the environment too. This PSA should create awareness on how the waste and pollution created by the vaping industry can be damaging to our ecosystem.

Below are some of the issues:

- **Plastic Pollution:** Vape pods and cartridges are often made of plastic and are not biodegradable. When thrown away improperly, they end up in landfills or waterways, contributing to plastic pollution.
- **Toxic Chemicals:** Vape devices contain nicotine, heavy metals, and other chemicals. When discarded, these substances can leak into soil and water, harming wildlife and contaminating drinking water.
- **Battery Waste:** Most vapes use lithium-ion batteries. Improper disposal can lead to battery leaks, fires, and environmental hazards.
- **Impact on Wildlife:** Animals can ingest vape waste or be exposed to toxic chemicals, which can cause harm.
- **Lack of Recycling Infrastructure:** Most vape products are not designed for recycling, and existing systems cannot handle their disposal.

Avoiding vaping altogether is the best way to protect both personal health and our planet.

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PSA Topic: Real-Time vs. Screen-Time

In this PSA, we invite you to raise awareness about the importance of reducing screen time to support real-life connections with family and friends, while also exploring the benefits of being present and experiencing life without constant distractions of the screens.

Here is some information that could help you get started:

- Screen-time refers to time spent using devices like smartphones, tablets, computers, and TVs. Real-time refers to time spent engaging in activities that do not involve screens, such as spending time with family and friends, being outdoors, being active or relaxing, etc.
- Highlight the benefits of spending quality time with family and friends without screens. It helps make the connections deeper, have shared experiences, and create long-lasting memories. Spending time with loved ones can reduce stress and anxiety.
- There are also physical health benefits of reducing screen time. For example, reducing screen time, especially before bed, can improve sleep. Less time on screens can also mean more time for physical activities like walking, jogging, or playing sports.
- Real-time interactions with people help develop social skills and emotional intelligence. Face-to-face interactions allow us to pick up on non-verbal cues like body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice which are vital for effective communication. We can see and feel other people's emotions more directly, and that enhances our ability to connect and empathize with others.
- Sometimes people use screens to avoid being bored. But moments of boredom can be good because they can boost creative thinking and lead to unexpected insights and innovative solutions. Taking time away from screens could provide more time for exploring and engaging in activities such as volunteering or joining a club, or engaging in hobbies like art, music, gardening, cooking, or reading.

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