

RED RIBBON WEEK

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER TOOL KIT
LIFE IS A PUZZLE, SOLVE IT DRUG FREE.

**RESOURCES AND
ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE
DRUG-FREE LIVING AND
OPIOID AWARENESS**





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LIFE IS A

PUZZLE,

SOLVE IT

**DRUG
FREE™**



RED RIBBON WEEK® OCTOBER 23-31
WWW.REDRIBBON.ORG



INTRODUCTION



Dear Educators and Leaders,

The Alaska Department of Health (DOH) has developed the Red Ribbon Week Teacher Toolkit for schools and would like to extend an invitation to participate in our Door Decorating Contest. I am personally thrilled to offer our educators, administrators, school nurses, students, and families this resource and opportunity, as we find new ways to come together and collectively respond to the rising public health crisis related to opioid overdoses and deaths in Alaska.

Schools serve as the heart of Alaska's communities and are in a unique position to take action. This toolkit provides resources and guidance to:

- Integrate prevention education into classrooms, equipping students with the knowledge they need to stay safe.
- Support parents in having positive and effective conversations about these challenging topics at home.
- Have fun creating unique door designs that encourage students to live drug-free, with the opportunity to win exciting prizes!

As Red Ribbon Week approaches, we look forward to seeing how you incorporate the Teacher Toolkit into your efforts. It is designed to help you engage students in prevention education and foster a safe, healthy learning environment. Together, we can make a difference in protecting our youth from the dangers they face today. Your commitment and dedication are key to the success of our students!

Thank you for your ongoing partnership,

SECOND ANNUAL:
Red Ribbon Week Door
Decorating Contest



MEET JET THE RAVEN!

Clever, curious, and always learning.



Jet is always looking for answers and enjoys solving puzzles. With a sharp mind and a curious spirit, Jet reminds us that education and learning are powerful tools to help us make healthy choices.

This year, Jet is excited to introduce our Second Annual Door Decorating Contest! Work with your classmates to design a puzzle-inspired door that celebrates living drug-free. Remember, one wrong piece can ruin the whole picture—just like drugs can impact our lives. Staying drug-free keeps the puzzle complete!



DOOR DECORATING INFORMATION

- Contest runs **October 1 – October 29, 2025**
- Submissions due: **October 29 at 4:00 PM**
- Winners chosen: **Between October 30 – November 3**
- Winning classrooms will receive prizes and statewide recognition!
- Scan the QR code and complete the form



NAVIGATING CONVERSATIONS



Conversations between educators and youth can be challenging at times, especially when it comes to developing skills that encourage youth to make healthy choices. The following are examples of topics to discuss with middle school aged children. Be sure to decide age-appropriateness of topics, which depends on the young person and their experiences.

- **Communication:** Ask open-ended questions that intentionally ask them what they think and feel, to increase your understanding of what they have learned or seen.

- **Coping:** Talk about healthy ways to deal with stress and tough emotions.

- **Peer Pressure:** Ask them what they'd do in different situations. Role-play to help them stay safe. Young people care a lot about their friendships; consider ways to maintain their physical safety as well as their self-esteem.

- **Risk Taking:** Remember, taking some risks is normal when you're young. If your teen likes excitement, help them find healthy ways to create and burn energy safely. Performing on stage, rock climbing, or fast-paced sports like snowboarding, can provide an energy outlet and also become a way to form healthy connections with trusted adults and peer groups. Don't forget the helmet and other safety gear!

- **Drug Consequences:** Discuss the risks of using nicotine, marijuana and other drugs. Ask what they think and what they have heard about how it can harm their bodies and brains. Use words and examples that make sense to them based on their maturity level and try to frame the conversation with as many questions as you can, rather than statements.

- **Pill dangers:** Talk about the risk of taking any medicine unless it's given to them by a parent/guardian or doctor. Some people are selling or giving away fake pills, even in Alaska. They can look just like real ones, but they aren't. Taking even one of these pills can make you very sick or even make you stop breathing. Consider asking, "What would you do if you found a pill, or if someone, even your friend, tried to give you one?" Depending on their maturity level, consider talking about how to recognize the signs of an overdose and what they can do if they see someone with those symptoms. Talk about why there are directions on medicines and why it's important to follow them.

- **Media:** Discuss how social media influencers and companies trying to sell their products may make it seem like most people use nicotine or other drugs more than they really do. Teach them how to think carefully and question these ideas, reminding them that learning to take responsibility for their own actions as they get older is one important way to build trust with you and others. Ask if they've seen or heard about people using medicines differently than how they are intended on social media and what they think about it. Consider sharing any "trends" you have seen or heard about, and ask what they think. Make sure they know how to be safe when using the internet.

Teachers, collaborate with your school's administration to develop a plan if you suspect a student is under the influence.

Every school in Alaska is equipped with two doses of naloxone and training materials are available on the Department of Education's website.

<https://education.alaska.gov/elearning/naloxone>



GO BEYOND CONVERSATION

Parents and trusted adults can nurture positive elements to help prevent drug use. These can include:

Keeping a strong connection with their child and keeping communication open.

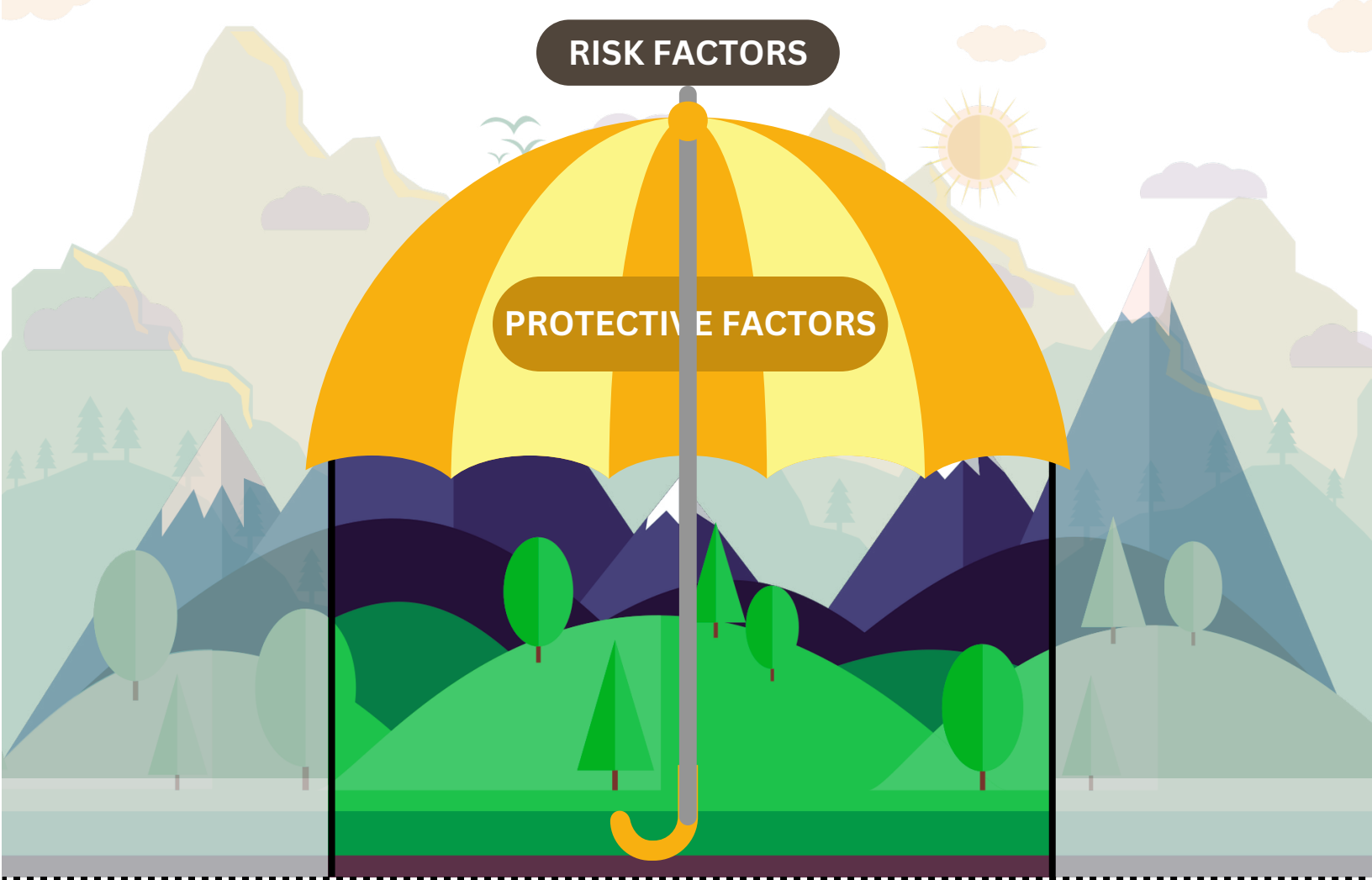
Teaching them to handle social situations, solve problems, and stick up for what they believe.

Guiding them to take part in activities that help them grow, align with their community's values, and connect positive role models.

Encouraging them to surround themselves with friends who make healthy choices.

Empowering them to feel in control of their lives and capable of dealing with changes.

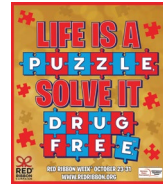
Providing appropriate supervision to ensure their safety and well-being.



EATING GOOD FOOD	PLAYING & MOVING AROUND	GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP		
HAVING A SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP	FEELING WORRIED OR SAD	SAD OR SCARY THINGS HAPPENING		
DOING FUN THINGS YOU LIKE	SAYING SORRY WHEN YOU'RE WRONG	BEING STRONG WHEN THINGS ARE HARD		
BEING KIND TO OTHERS	GOING THROUGH TOUGH TIMES	HAVING SOMEONE YOU TRUST		

WRITE YOUR OWN!

RED RIBBON WEEK YOUTH PLEDGE FORM:



I Support Red Ribbon Week®

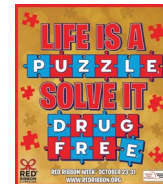
I Pledge To Grow Up Safe, Healthy & Drug Free By:

-  Understanding the dangers of drug use and abuse.
-  Respecting myself and being drug free.
-  Spreading the word to family and friends about the importance of being healthy and drug free.

Name _____ School _____

Download tips for fun Red Ribbon activities at www.redribbon.org

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I Support Red Ribbon Week®

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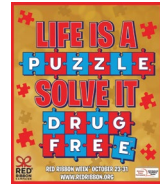
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RED RIBBON WEEK ADULT PLEDGE FORM:



I Support Red Ribbon Week®

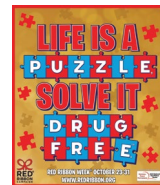
I Pledge To Help Kids Grow Up Safe, Healthy & Drug Free By:

-  Talking to my kids about the dangers of drug use and abuse and setting clear rules about not using drugs.
-  Working together with the parents of my children's friends to set common boundaries and monitor behavior so that our rules are respected and reinforced.
-  Setting a good example for our children by not using illegal drugs or medicine without a prescription.
-  Visiting www.redribbon.org to learn more and spread the message to family and friends.

Name _____ School _____

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SAMPLE LETTER/ EMAIL TO FAMILIES



PARENT NOTIFICATION SAMPLE FORM (ENGLISH)

Dear Parents and/or Guardians,

Our school district is participating in substance use prevention programs for elementary students.

Research shows that starting prevention education early can help reduce substance use in high school. Our goal is to support your child's healthy growth and learning throughout their education.

Scan the QR code below for a brochure from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education called Growing Up Drug Free – A Parent's Guide to Prevention. It explains why starting substance use prevention early is important.

The program will teach kids about how the brain and lungs work, along with lessons on emotional health. Everything will be age-appropriate and use language your child already knows.

<https://operationprevention.discoveryeducation.com/player/502840ed-1fc8-47d2-8ed5-bb91cf65e202>



To have your child opt out of this education program return this form signed below.

☐ I do not want my child to receive the preventative education

Child's Name

Parent's Signature

SAMPLE SPIRIT WEEK DAYS & CONVERSATION STARTERS

OCTOBER

23

“Everyday Heroes” (Prevention)

Spirit Theme: Dress as someone who is a hero to you—whether it’s a real-life figure like a doctor or firefighter, or a fictional superhero.

Discussion Topics:

- Discuss how different people in our communities help protect us from the dangers of drugs. Explain the role of law enforcement and community leaders in keeping drugs out of our neighborhoods, and how making smart choices helps us, too.

OCTOBER

24

“Together We Can!” (Prevention)

Spirit Theme: Wear team jerseys or school colors to show that by working together, we can prevent drug misuse and make smart decisions.

Discussion Topics:

- Talk about the importance of prevention—how getting involved in positive activities like sports or clubs helps keep us focused on healthy choices and away from harmful substances.

OCTOBER

27

“Shine Bright for Recovery” (Recovery)

Spirit Theme: Wear something that shines or glows to show your support for recovery and resilience.

Discussion Topics:

- Talk about what it means to recover—finding strength, learning from challenges, and moving forward.
- Discuss how being supportive and nonjudgmental helps others who may be struggling.
- Encourage students to think about ways they can take care of themselves and others during hard times.

SAMPLE SPIRIT WEEK DAYS & CONVERSATION STARTERS

OCTOBER

28

“Be Yourself Day” (Harm Reduction)

Spirit Theme: Dress in a way that expresses who you are—whether that’s through mismatched clothes or your favorite outfit.

Discussion Topics:

- Explain that harm reduction means reducing the risks we face. Talk about how making healthy decisions, even when others are doing something harmful, helps protect us and keep our bodies and minds strong

OCTOBER

29

“Wear Red For Support” (Treatment)

Spirit Theme: Show off your wildest hair to show that you care about making healthy decisions.

Discussion Topics:

- Discuss how treatment is available for people who need help with substance use. Emphasize that asking for help is a sign of strength and that it’s important to support friends or family members who are struggling.

OCTOBER

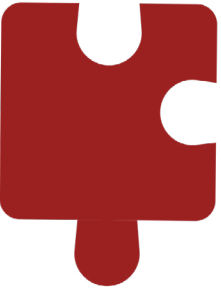
30

“Career: Imagine Your Future!” (Recovery)

Spirit Theme: Dress as your future self in the career or role you want to pursue.

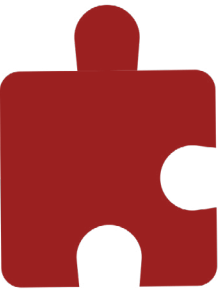
Discussion Topics:

- Talk about how a drug-free lifestyle allows us to achieve our dreams and goals. Discuss how people in recovery are able to rebuild their lives and pursue their own dreams after getting the help they need.



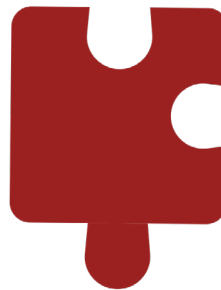
PARENT RESOURCES

- [Parent Toolkit](#) – Operation Prevention, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Department of Justice
- [Growing up Drug Free](#) – Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Department of Justice
- [Red Ribbon Week Resources](#) – Red Ribbon Week takes place each year from October 23 through 31st.
- [Project Launch](#) – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- [One Pill Can Kill](#)
- [Family Summit](#)
- [Operation Prevention](#)



EDUCATOR RESOURCES

- [The Science of Addiction, National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)
- [Fentanyl Awareness Guide for Parents, Teens and College Students](#)
- [Lesson Plans & Activities](#) – National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- [School & Educator Resources](#) – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- [Educator Toolkit](#) – Operation Prevention, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Department of Justice
- [Montana Meth Prevention](#)
- [National Fentanyl Awareness Day](#)
- [Fentanyl Lesson Plan](#) – Natural High
- [The Science of Addiction](#) – Operation Prevention



OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America](#)
- [Drug Enforcement Administration](#)
- [Drug Free America Foundation](#)
- [DUI Resources: A Guide To Charges, Treatment, and Supportive Services](#)
- [Lock Your Meds](#)
- [Drunk Driving Statistics](#)
- [How to Quit Cigarettes](#)
- [Mothers Against Drunk Driving](#)
- [National Association for Children of Alcoholics](#)
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)
- [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)
- [Natural High Red Ribbon Resources](#)
- [NIDA for Teens](#)
- [Students Against Destructive Decisions](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

Why Participate?

The Red Ribbon Week Door Decorating Contest encourages teachers and students to work together to decorate their classroom doors based on this year's theme:

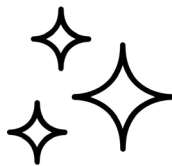


Life is a Puzzle, Solve It Drug Free.

Red Ribbon Week Decoration Contest Information

The Alaska Department of Health, in partnership with Governor Mike Dunleavy and other statewide partners, are excited to announce the second annual of the Red Ribbon Week Door Decorating Contest, open to all schools across Alaska! This is a fantastic opportunity for your school to get involved in the nation's longest-running drug prevention campaign and inspire students to live healthy, drug-free lives.

By participating, your school can:



Spark meaningful conversations around the dangers of drugs and the importance of living drug-free.



Engage students in a fun and creative activity that promotes healthy choices.



Compete for a chance to win great prizes and statewide recognition!



How to Get Involved:

1

Decorate Your Door:

Collaborate with your students to create a puzzle-themed door that highlights the importance of living drug-free. We encourage you to incorporate imagery and messages that inspire students to make healthy choices.

2

Submit Your Photos:

Simply take photos of your decorated doors (no students in the photos, please!) and submit them to our contest portal:

[Online Contest Portal Link.](#)

3

Access Classroom Resources:

Collaborate with your students to create a puzzle-themed door that highlights the importance of living drug-free. We encourage you to incorporate imagery and messages that inspire students to make healthy choices.

Prizes & Recognition

Prizes:

Amazon gift cards and other great prizes will be given to the winning Elementary, Middle School and High School classroom.

Recognition:

Classrooms with the winning design will receive special recognition from Governor Dunleavy and/or Commissioner Hedberg!

■ Important Dates

Submission Period: *October 1st – October 29th, 2025*

Winners Announced: Shortly after Red Ribbon Week ends
(*October 30rd – November 3rd*)

We highly encourage all schools across Alaska to participate in this exciting campaign. Together, we can empower our students to live healthy, drug-free lives. Let's make this Red Ribbon Week unforgettable!

We look forward to seeing your creative entries!