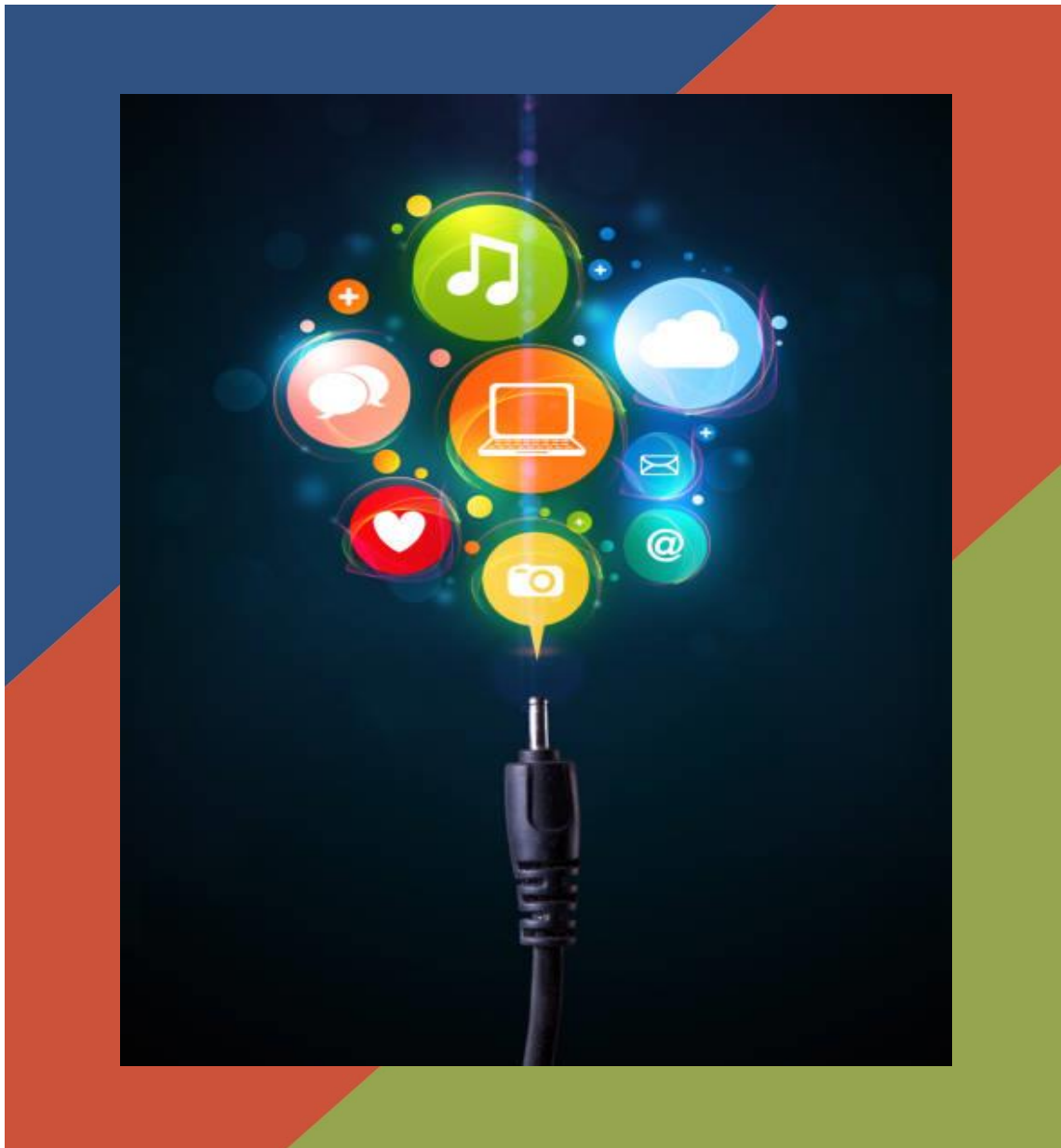


The Prevention Practitioner's Guide to Social Media



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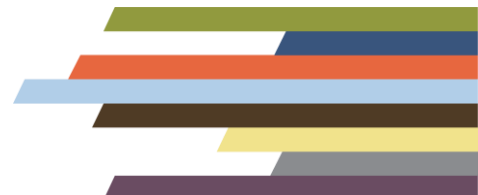
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The Prevention Practitioner's Guide to Social Media

Social media has become a part of American society with most Americans checking their social media accounts at least once a day. Consequently, it is important that prevention practitioners identify ways in which they can harness the power of social media to assist them in implementing their prevention strategies. This guide provides prevention practitioners with guidance regarding what to promote and which platforms to use for a variety of prevention activities.

What Should I Promote on Social Media?

You can promote anything you put online on social media. If you have an event, a Twitter chat, or a graphic you developed, pushing it out on social media is a great way to reach your intended audience.

Here are a few examples of things you can promote on social media:

- Facebook events;
- Twitter chats;
- live events;
- studies and research;
- social campaigns; and
- graphics.

What Should I Include?

Each platform has specific requirements and best practices. If you are promoting your event or prevention messages on Twitter, you may not use the same language or content as you would use on Facebook or Instagram. The following are a few general best practices for all social media platforms.

Include a Call to Action

A call to action gives your audience a specific step to take or task to do. This may be signing up for an event or just clicking a “like” button. Whatever your post is, there should be a suggested action for the user to keep them engaged with your content.

Include a Link when Appropriate

Don't just reference an event, research, etc.—include a link to the relevant web page with more in-depth information. Since social media is geared toward bite-sized, short-form content, give your users a brief snapshot of what it is you're showing them and then direct them to where the information is kept.

Include an Image

Social media posts with visuals get 180% greater engagement. Tweets with images receive 150% more retweets. Images make up 93% of the most engaging posts on Facebook.

Include Relevant Hashtags and Handles

One of the strengths of using social media to promote your content is that you can leverage relevant audiences to send out your message to a wider group of people. Make sure that when you promote specific campaigns or reference a user, you mention the individual or organization in the post. As events and campaigns often have specific hashtags associated with them, make sure you add those hashtags when applicable—the organizations running those campaigns will be looking for content.

Which Platforms Should I Promote on?

You should decide where to promote your materials based on whichever platforms your audience uses. For example, if you want to reach middle-aged females, Facebook is your prime platform. If you want to reach youth and teens, Snapchat might be the best option. Know where your audience is and meet them there. Dedicate some time to research where your intended audience is engaging. However, you should have a realistic idea of how much capacity your team has to maintain that presence. Social media platforms take a lot of time and energy to maintain, so make sure you master one before moving on to the next.

(The above information is taken from SAMHSA's website [Children's Mental Health Awareness Day](#).)

How Can I Learn More about the Platforms?

The following pages provide basic information about the most popular social media platforms today, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube. A table including the demographics for each platform is located following these descriptions.

Keep in Mind...

Few studies have been completed on the effectiveness of the use of social media with substance misuse prevention programs. Consequently, it is strongly recommended that evaluation is built into social media strategies you implement in your community.

Facebook

Users create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including status updates. Companies/organizations create pages and Facebook users can “like” those pages.¹

Special Considerations

- The overwhelming majority of social users over the age of 65 solely use Facebook for social media
- Key topics for older users are health and community⁵
- Video posts have been shown to attract the greatest amount of user engagement⁸

Primary Audiences

- Adults
- Adults over 65 years old

Best Practices Tips

- Avoid posting the same status updates on Facebook and Twitter
- Pay attention to Facebook “insights,” which include data on the use of your page
- Create visually appealing posts
- Create posts that encourage comments by others
- Facebook allows you to share content with a little more depth, so it's an ideal place for ongoing conversations

Prevention Examples

- Use the paid advertising option to target a very select audience that you need your prevention message to reach
- Create a Facebook page for your organization to increase your visibility in your community
- Hold public forums on Facebook Live to increase your community's readiness for prevention
- With their permission, share a series of parenting tips on other organizations' Facebook pages (e.g. local parenting groups, schools, new mom groups) with links to additional parenting resources

Instagram

A free photo and video sharing app that allows users to apply digital filters, frames and special effects to their photos and then share them on a variety of social networking sites.¹

Special Considerations

- Make data-driven decisions using Instagram analytics tools
- Instagram Stories are a great way to engage your audience with live video
- Instagram is also a good place to ask and answer topic-specific questions

Primary Audiences

- Teenagers
- Young adults

Best Practices Tips

- Use hashtags and tag others in your posts
- Like and comment relevant posts from others
- Post engaging, high quality images
- Post user generated content – people love to be acknowledged!
- Ask questions and engage with the answers

Prevention Examples

- Think of Instagram as a billboard campaign. What prevention messages would you share on a billboard?
- Hold contests for prevention related messages

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- Share positive social norming messages, such as “Most Anytown USA high school students would rather NOT drink alcohol when hanging out with friends” #healthyyouth
- Hold public forums on Instagram Live to increase your community’s readiness for prevention

LinkedIn

A place where groups of professionals with similar areas of interest can share information and participate in conversations.¹

Special Considerations

- LinkedIn enables you to network with people and professional organizations in the prevention field. This is a great way to stay up to date with the latest developments and to share information with others working in prevention

Primary Audiences

- Adults
- Professionals

Best Practices Tips

- Make sure that your posts are useful, informative, and relevant to your professional connections

Prevention Examples

- Use LinkedIn to identify members in your community who have the skills and talents you could use on your community coalition
- Create posts to advertise trainings available in your community
- Search LinkedIn to find new staff interested and skilled in the prevention field

Snapchat

A mobile app that lets users send photos and videos to friends or to their “story.” Images disappear after viewing or after 24 hours.¹

Special Considerations

- Helpful to use Snapchat in conjunction with other social media such as Twitter and Facebook
- This app was designed to be casual, fun, and lighthearted

Primary Audiences

- Pre-teens
- Teenagers
- Young adults

Best Practices Tips

- Track Snapchat metrics to see who is viewing your content and see what is performing well
- Design a sponsored geofilter—geofilters let cell phone users add an overlay that is location-based to the photos they share via Snapchat

Prevention Examples

- Post pictures of youth in your community making healthy choices and tag your organization
- Create a geofilter for your next event and encourage participants to use it
- Create Snaps and Stories of your prevention events

TikTok

TikTok is an iOS and Android media app that can be used for creating and sharing short videos up to 1 minute long.²

Special Considerations

- TikTok is all about having fun
- Focus on being lighthearted
- Using TikTok well has the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of people in minutes
- Be aware when selecting music for your videos—avoid vulgar messages and curse words

Primary Audiences

- Tweens
- Teenagers

Best Practices Tips⁷

- Use hashtags
- Monitor trending hashtags to follow current TikTok trends
- Comment regularly and encourage comments on your posts
- Post often – The more videos you post, the higher your follower rate is likely to be
- Use TikTok effects in your post (under the effects tab)
- Consider using TikTok ads
- Set up a challenge for users to share videos of themselves attempting your challenge

Prevention Examples

- Create a fun, lighthearted challenge with your organization's hashtag
- Make education videos on prevention topics on which you are well-versed

Twitter

A social networking/micro-blogging platform that allows groups and individuals to stay connected through the exchange of short status messages (280 character limit).¹

Special Considerations

- Twitter is good for short-form, easy-to-read public messages and real-time communication
- Twitter Polls allow for an interactive element—you can use them as mini-quizzes and post the answers as comments

Primary Audiences

- Teenagers
- Young adults

Best Practices Tips

- Use hashtags and tag others in your tweets
- Monitor your Twitter analytics
- Follow back relevant, appropriate people/organizations who follow you
- Using programs like TweetDeck or Hootsuite allows you to schedule tweets in advance

Prevention Examples

- Share positive community norms via Tweets, such as “Did you know that 85% of Anytown youth do not smoke? #healthykids”
- One city sent out this tweet as a part of their opioid prevention program:
 - “The @CityofCHeights is giving away free @SaferLockRX combination locking bottles and caps to parents who want to safely secure powerful prescription medications at home. #opioids #prevention <https://t.co/RZno6n7exf?amp=1>”

YouTube

Video hosting and watching websites.¹

Special Considerations

- Don't use copyrighted material or it will be removed
- Check privacy settings and determine what level is needed for each video

Primary Audiences

- All ages up to 65

Best Practices Tips

- Make your content accessible by using closed captioning or subtitles through YouTube
- Explore placing an advertisement on YouTube
- Determine and select which setting is appropriate for how people can comment on your video: allow all comments, hold potentially inappropriate comments for review, hold all comments for review, or disable comments

Prevention Examples

- Create a YouTube channel for your organization to house the videos you post
- Post videos about your local prevention activities
- Post links on Facebook and Twitter to high quality, factually correct videos on YouTube already
- Search YouTube for existing high quality, effective videos to which you can share via other social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

Demographics of Users

Social media use varies by age, gender, and geographical area. Data for each of the social media platforms described in this document are noted in the tables below. Tables 1 and 2 present the percentage of people worldwide in each demographic group that use the social media platform at least daily. Table 3 presents TikTok data that describe the percentage of their users by age group and gender, so it is not comparable to available data for the other social media platforms included.

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Table 1. Percentage of people by age group who log into social media worldwide at least daily³

Platform	Ages 13-17	Ages 18-29	Ages 30-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65+
Facebook	51%	79%	79%	68%	46%
Instagram	72%	67%	47%	23%	8%
LinkedIn	n/a	28%	37%	24%	11%
Snapchat	69%	62%	25%	9%	3%
Twitter	32%	38%	26%	17%	7%
YouTube	85%	91%	87%	70%	38%

Table 2: Percentage of people by gender and geographical area who log into social media worldwide at least daily³

Platform	Female	Male	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Facebook	75%	63%	73%	69%	66%
Instagram	43%	31%	46%	35%	21%
LinkedIn	24%	29%	33%	30%	10%
Snapchat	24%	24%	29%	20%	20%
Twitter	21%	24%	26%	22%	13%
YouTube	68%	78%	77%	74%	64%

Table 3. Percentage TikTok users by age and gender⁶

Platform	Ages 10-19	Ages 20-29	Ages 30-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50+	Female	Male
TikTok	37%	26%	17%	14%	6%	44%	56%

Learn More

Creating Images

There are many free resources with tutorials that will help you create images without investing a lot of time. Here are just a couple:

- [Canva](#)
- [PicMonkey](#)



Dealing with Social Media “Trolls”

Deal with social media “trolls” (people who deliberately provoke others online) [by following these nine steps outlined in this blog.](#)

Developing Social Media Policies and Plans

SAMHSA has developed some [sample social media guidelines](#) that will help your team develop your own social media policies.

Developing a social media plan to support substance misuse prevention efforts will help you create meaningful content and stay on top of your social media. [Learn more in this document.](#)

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are critical when using social media. [Learn more about this here.](#)

Framing Messages

Creating impactful, positive messages will make a stronger impact. Learn more by reviewing the FrameWorks Institute’s document [Reframing Adolescent Substance Use and Its Prevention: A Communications Playbook.](#)

Guides on How to Tag

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)

Social Media Influencers

This Tool describes the unique role users can play in your social media efforts for prevention. [The Messenger Matters: Using Social Media Influencers and Content Champions to Promote Prevention Efforts.](#)

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