

“Up in Smoke” Diversion Program Policy Handbook 24-25

1. Introductions

Welcome to the “Up in Smoke” Diversion Program at SAFE Coalition. This handbook provides an overview of the policies and procedures that guide our program. SAFE is a judgment-free community organization relentlessly committed to educating and supporting those affected by substance use disorder and mental health concerns across southeastern Massachusetts. Up in Smoke is a 3-day program developed and run by SAFE to help teens better understand their decisions related to substance use. With trained staff working in small group settings, the course empowers students to discover freedom, opportunities, and self-respect through daily habits.

2. Program Objectives

The primary objectives of the Diversion Program are:

1. Provide an Alternative to a Traditional Suspension: Offer a supportive and educational program as an alternative to traditional disciplinary actions for teens facing substance use-related infractions.
2. Provide Substance Use Education and Resources: Educate teens about the risks and impacts of substance use, empowering them with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.
3. Promote Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): Focus on building resilience, and interpersonal skills through SEL-based curricula, encouraging participants to make healthier decision-making habits.
4. Empower Teens with Healthy Coping Mechanisms: Provide teens with tools and strategies for managing stress, anxiety, and peer pressure, reducing their reliance on substances as a coping mechanism.
5. Create a Supportive, Judgment-Free Environment: Ensure a safe and non-judgmental space where teens can openly discuss their challenges, seek guidance, and receive encouragement to make positive changes in their lives.

3. Program Enrollment

Enrollment in the Diversion Program includes the following steps:

1. Referral: Students are referred to the program by teachers, administrators, or counselors at the school. Guardians also have the option to submit referrals. Referrals can be made here: <https://forms.office.com/r/g9QRFYQYU1?origin=lprLink>.
2. Sign-Up: Our front desk will reach out via email or phone to assist with enrolling the student, provide details about the program, and address any question's referent may have.
3. Agreement: Student's guardian must sign a participation agreement and our policy handbook outlining their commitment to the program's requirements.

4. Program Components

The Diversion Program includes the following components:

1. Restorative Justice Practices: Encourages accountability and healing through facilitated discussions, helping teens understand the impact of their actions and promoting positive change without punitive measures.
2. Substance Use Education: Provides teens with accurate information on the risks of substance use, the science of addiction, and long-term health impacts, empowering them to make informed decisions.
3. Harm Reduction Tools: Introduces practical strategies to reduce the risks of substance use, focusing on safety and harm minimization while encouraging healthier choices at the participant's own pace.
4. Stanford's Toolkit: The Stanford Toolkit is a set of research-based resources designed to help teens develop decision-making skills, increase emotional regulation, and manage peer pressure.
5. WhyTry Exercises: WhyTry is an evidence-based program that uses metaphors, and experiential activities to teach teens resilience and self-motivation.

5. Participant Responsibilities

Students are expected to:

1. Attend all 3 days of the program.
 - a. Excused absences are permitted if approved by the school such as:
 - i. Illness
 - ii. Medical appointments
2. Follow all program rules and regulations.
3. Report any change in attendance with the program as soon as possible. Please email info@safecoalitionma.org with any change regarding attendance. Staff will coordinate a make-up session if necessary.

6. Confidentiality

At SAFE Coalition, we value confidentiality of all participants and clients. SAFE follows the expectations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and all SAFE staff are mandated reporters which means we are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to authorities.

7. Data Collection and Reporting

SAFE Coalition will collect data on program participation and outcomes for evaluation purposes. Under HIPAA, the data will be used only to assess program effectiveness and ensure compliance with funding requirements. Students' personal information will be protected and reported in anonymous form and personal information cannot be shared unless legally requested.

8. Program's Code of Conduct

At SAFE Coalition, we are committed to fostering a trauma-informed, supportive environment. The following rules are strictly enforced to maintain safety and respect for all participants:

1. **Respectful Communication:** All participants are expected to communicate respectfully. Disrespectful language, offensive remarks, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
2. **Confidentiality:** Students are expected to respect the privacy of others. Personal information shared in the program should remain confidential to create a safe space for open discussion.
3. **Attendance and Punctuality:** Participants are required to attend all program sessions on time unless an excused absence has been approved by the school.
4. **Property Respect:** Participants must respect the property of SAFE Coalition and others. Any form of vandalism or misuse of resources is prohibited.
5. **Substance Prohibition:** No use, sale, exchange, or possession of any legal or illegal substances is allowed on SAFE Coalition property.
6. **Medication Policy:** All medically prescribed medications must be accompanied by a valid doctor's note.
7. **Professional Boundaries:** Facilitators and students are expected to engage in appropriate, respectful relationship-building behaviors.
8. **Prohibited Behaviors:**
 - a. Any form of violence or physical aggression is strictly forbidden.
 - b. No displays of sexual behavior are permitted.
 - c. Bullying of any kind—verbal, emotional, cyber, physical, or sexual—will not be tolerated.

9. Weather Protocol

The safety of our staff and participants is a top priority at SAFE Coalition. In the event of inclement weather, the following procedures will be followed to ensure everyone's well-being:

1. **Program Cancellations:**
 - a. In the event of severe weather conditions, SAFE Coalition may cancel or delay programs.
 - b. Cancellations will be communicated via email, phone, and social media platforms by 7:00AM the morning of class.
 - c. If local schools are closed due to weather, SAFE Coalition programs will also be canceled for that day.
2. **Early Dismissals:**
 - a. Should severe weather occur during a program, SAFE Coalition may dismiss participants early. Parents and guardians will be notified immediately to arrange transportation.
 - b. Staff will remain on-site until all participants have been picked up safely.

3. Participant's Guardians Responsibility:

- a. Participant's guardians are responsible for ensuring their contact information is up to date so they can be informed of any weather-related changes.

10. Transportation Protocol

At SAFE Coalition, we expect guardians to provide transportation for participants to and from our programs. However, we understand that there may be circumstances where this is not possible. The following protocol outlines our approach to handling transportation needs:

1. Guardian Responsibility: Guardians are generally responsible for ensuring that participants arrive at and depart from SAFE Coalition programs on time.
2. Notification of Transportation Issues: If a guardian is unable to provide transportation, they should contact info@safecoalitionma.org or call us at 508-488-8105. We will arrange alternative transportation through Uber for Teens.

11. Lunch Protocol

At SAFE Coalition, we provide lunch for all students participating in our Diversion Program. To ensure a smooth and safe dining experience, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Lunch Provision: SAFE Coalition will provide lunch for all students from local vendors. The menu will vary, and we aim to offer nutritious and appealing options.
2. Allergy Notifications: Guardians must notify the Front Desk Staff and Program Facilitators of any food allergies or dietary restrictions prior to the student's participation in the program.

12. Contact Information

For more details about the program, please visit our "Up in Smoke" page at:

<https://www.safecoalitionma.org/up-in-smoke>. If you have additional questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@safecoalitionma.org.

13. Guardian Resources

A resource sheet with general support services will be provided to guardians prior to the student's participation in the program. If additional assistance is needed, contact information for SAFE Coalition will be included on the sheet.

14. Guardian's Signature

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and agree to the policy handbook and program requirements.

Sign here: