



Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Mental Health Teach-In Toolkit

With Support From
Community Catalyst, Inc.
and the Annie E. Casey
Foundation



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ABOUT PARTNERSHIP FOR SOUTHERN EQUITY (PSE)

For over twelve years, the **Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE)** has advanced policies and institutional actions to promote racial equity and shared prosperity for all in the growth of the American South. PSE strives to bring equitable balance to the social, political, and economic systems which have long been employed to maintain an imbalance of opportunity and quality of life for people and communities of color. To achieve these outcomes, we work to build an equity ecosystem through consensus building, issue framing, training, policy, advocacy, and collective impact organizing. PSE focuses its work on four key portfolios – Just Energy, Just Growth, Just Opportunity, and Just Health.

Embedded in each of the portfolios is **YES! for Equity** - a national training and movement-building force built on the belief that racial equity and intergenerational power-sharing are essential to creating community change. YES! for Equity believes that our collective power as youth and adult allies to achieve the change we seek in the world depends on recognizing the history of structural racism that exists in the United States. We embrace the responsibility to work toward organizational and societal change to create more equitable, thriving communities for all.

ABOUT COMMUNITY CATALYST

Community Catalyst is a national health advocacy organization whose mission is to build the power of people to create a health system rooted in racial equity and health justice in a society where health is a fundamental right.

The Substance Use Disorder Program works with communities to improve health care at local, state, and federal levels through policies shaped by and accountable to people with lived experiences of substance use disorders. Our team is especially passionate about centering young people and their needs!





What is the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act?

On June 25, 2022, President Biden signed into law the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), legislation that expands vital mental health services and provides additional support for states and school districts to design and enhance initiatives promoting safer, more inclusive, and positive school environments for all students, educators, and school staff. This bipartisan legislation provides a total of over \$13 billion in federal funding to bolster public safety and innovative programs to help stop tragedies before they occur, including substantial investments in mental health, school safety, and state-led crisis intervention programs.

This bill will:

Enhance Background Checks for Buyers Under 21

Establishes an enhanced background check process and up to a three-business-day investigative period for buyers under age 21 that requires checking with state law enforcement, local law enforcement, and either state or local courts before the sale proceeds. This strengthens current law stopping gun dealers from selling handguns to persons under 21, and any gun to persons under 18.

Support State Red Flag Laws

Provides \$750 million in much-needed funding over the next five years to support crisis intervention services, including the implementation of state Red Flag laws. The bill also unlocks additional well-established existing federal funds to support the implementation of Red Flag laws.

Disarm Domestic Abusers

Expands the current prohibition preventing convicted domestic abusers from buying or possessing guns including not only those who abused their spouses but also those who abused their current or recent dating partners.





What is the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act?

Clarify Who Must Run a Background Check

Clarifies existing law on what it means to be “engaged in the business” of selling firearms, so it is clearer when unlicensed people selling guns to strangers are required to obtain a Federal Firearms License and run background checks on all sales.

Crack Down on Gun Trafficking

Establishes the first-ever federal law against interstate gun trafficking and straw purchasing to stop the flow of illegal guns into cities.

Fund Community Violence Intervention

Includes \$250 million in dedicated funding for evidence-informed, community-based violence intervention programs proven to reduce gun violence in the most affected communities using a public health approach.

Invest in Mental Health Services

Provides critical resources to expand community mental health services for children and families, funds school-based mental health and supportive services, invest in telehealth mental health services to expand access, and invests in community crisis intervention programs.

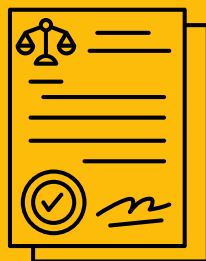
Provide School Safety Funding

Funds school violence prevention efforts, training, and the implementation of safety measures at primary and secondary schools.

References:

<https://www.everytown.org/what-is-the-bipartisan-safer-communities-act/>

<https://oese.ed.gov/bipartisan-safer-communities-act/>





Visual Project Guide

A visual project is a tool to help tell the story of a specific issue impacting your community. For this project, youth teams will develop a visual presentation for community engagement events, to educate their peers and other attendees about the state of youth mental health in their community and the Bi-Partisan Safer Communities Act. These visual projects can include photo-voice, a slide deck presentation with pictures, video, or TikTok.

Examples

The mission of Open Arms Incorporated is to bring healing, hope, and help to children, adults, and their families in need of support, intervention, and prevention as a result of child abuse and homelessness. Jasmine and Caleb, two youth staff at Open Arms, worked collectively on creating an oral health equity video project. They coordinated with a professional film crew to interview a mother and her child to tell their oral health story. In this short film, they effectively captured the financial and mental health struggles that come along with the oral health inequities impacting the families they serve. This video has been featured at the local level for youth-led advocacy and during a national convening on oral health equity hosted by the CareQuest Foundation.

View Open Arms's Oral Health Equity photo voice project here:



Video [Link](#) Here





How to Develop a Video for Social Change?

Tips For Producing A Great Video.

What Is The Story You Want To Tell?

Brainstorm ideas - Then storyboard or script your plan. Good storytelling keeps viewers interested in your video.

Image Quality - Focus, lighting, frame composition, and image stability all contribute to image quality. Careful attention to these details will help you produce a video that people want to watch.

Sound Quality - Not all messages are conveyed visually. Sound is an important component, and not all video cameras are good at recording audio. Paying attention to volume and background noise can help improve sound quality. Subtitles can assist when speech is not clear. If you use them, make sure the subtitles are clear and easy to read.

Orientation - Consider producing your video in portrait mode. Since we are interested in videos that can be posted on social media, and will likely be viewed on phones, portrait mode can be a better choice than landscape, which looks better on a computer screen.

Editing and Transitions - Choose essential scenes. Editing to hold the viewer's interest while keeping it under 90 seconds and selecting appropriate transitions to move from one scene to the next will keep your video flowing.

Online Resources - Search out online resources that explain the video production process. Watching videos that others have created and you like, is another way to get ideas for your video.





What is Photovoice?

Photovoice is a qualitative research method used in communities that gathers photographs and narratives taken by individuals to translate lived experiences into actionable knowledge. Photovoice is commonly used in the fields of education, advocacy, public health, and community development. According to Wang and Burris, the creators of the process, a Photovoice project should aim to: (1) build power in individuals to document and reflect on community strengths and challenges, (2) invite discussion and create knowledge about important community issues while using photographs to start the discussion, (3) reach policymakers and stakeholders. Since participants address issues non-verbally with photographs, photovoice can be used to overcome social, cultural, and language barriers to communication. Photovoice can be used by participants regardless of age, education level, language, gender, race, class, disability, etc. Photovoice is used to gather new insights and perspectives that raise awareness of hidden or overlooked issues and aspects of a given community.

How To Do A Photovoice Project:

1. Decide on a topic
2. Come up with ideas for the photo/ brainstorm
3. Take the picture
4. Decide whether you want a statement in the picture
5. Edit the picture, use programs allowing the use of effects to change, and manipulate the image to express more feeling

Photovoice Tips:

- Brainstorm ideas of what you want to photograph before you start so you have a good idea of what you want to take a picture of
- Ask permission from people before you take a picture of them
- Come up with creative ways to incorporate your statement
- Take lots of pictures so you have options
- Play around with different camera settings and effects
- Don't be afraid to use stereotypes if you are working against them
- Take pictures that will make people talk, and don't be afraid to start a conversation
- Use props





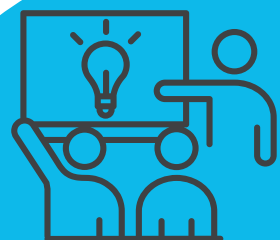
What is a Teach-In?

Teach-ins are educational, interactive forums where people come together to focus on and discuss a topic. They are meant to be practical, participatory, empowering, and action-oriented. Lectures, forums, discussion panels, and free debates can all be part of teach-ins.

Organizing a teach-in should be seen as part of a larger and longer organizing effort, not as a one-off event. Teach-ins are crucial at this time for educating and awakening Americans to the urgency of the mental health crisis. As with other critical historical moments in our history, teach-ins are an important tactic for personally engaging people, and building an effective, responsive movement.

Planning Your Teach-In

There are many different components that go into planning a teach-in including picking a day and time, selecting a location, creating an agenda, and advertising the event. We recommend starting the planning process at least **two months in advance** to allow enough time for getting the word out.





Facilitation Tips

We also wanted to provide some tips for interacting with the audience and keeping the conversation flowing:

- **Use the “2-1” Rule** - Often facilitation can be a little nerve-racking causing you to speed up by accident. Remember pausing usually seems like 2-3 seconds for you, but is only about a second in real time!
- **Be Comfortable With Short Stints of Silence** - Remember this is usually the participant's first time seeing this content so take a step back and let them process a question before you answer it for them.
- **Keep An Open Posture** - Make sure to use your hands to communicate and smile. The goal is to create a comfortable environment for shared learning!
- **Count On Your Fellow Facilitators** - If you are stuck or forget to say something. Your team is there to help whether to add to what you are saying or just for support.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice!** - You don't want to read exactly from the slide. Having notes about key takeaways for each slide is always a good practice.
- **Print the Agenda or Run of the Show** - Have it handy to keep you on track throughout the session!



Logistics



Day/Time

If your teach-in is geared toward youth, you will want to consider school schedules when selecting a date and time. Scheduling the teach-in in the evening or on a weekend day ensures youth can participate. The length of teach-ins can vary anywhere from one hour to several hours depending on your goals.

Location

College campuses, high schools, public libraries, places of worship, and community centers are all great options for a teach-in location. When selecting a location for your teach-in, think about places centrally located, accessible for people with disabilities, allow outside food/snacks, and are easily accessible via public transportation. Also, consider venues that would donate space free of charge if you have a limited budget for the event.

Child Care

As you coordinate logistics for your Teach-In, consider what the needs will be for people attending with young children. Brainstorm ways that you can create a fun, safe space for children where they can be monitored so that everyone can fully engage in the event.

Accessibility

To make your event as inclusive and accessible as possible for people with disabilities, create an Event Registration Form and include this link in all of your marketing materials. Aside from basic information (name and pronouns), include questions such as:

Do you need interpretation services?

American Sign Language
Spanish Language
Other (please specify)

Will you be attending with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA)?

Do you have any dietary needs?

Select any accommodations you require from the following list:

- Electronic copies of the materials in advance
- Hard copies of the materials on-site
- Materials in a font size over 14 pt
- Wheelchair access
- Other (please specify)

You can also create a more inclusive event by asking each speaker/facilitator to use a microphone and speak slowly.





Marketing

Flyers and Posters

Create a flyer or poster for your Teach-In that is eye-catching and easy to read. Be sure to highlight the name and purpose of the event, the date, the time, and the location. To make it easier for people to register, attach your electronic registration form to a QR code or a text-to-register code. Recommended online resources for this are [Eztexting.com](https://eztexting.com) and [QR.generator.com](https://qr.generator.com).



Sample Flyer

Basic Tips for Developing a Poster

- Simplicity is key. Do not have too many different elements on one poster.
- Large, colorful images will grab your viewer's attention. Look for colors that contrast and work well together on a page. Some good color palette generators are [Adobe](https://adobe.com) and [Canva](https://canva.com).
- Using high-quality stock photos, real photo images or illustrated clipart is another good way to catch your audience's eye.
- Your poster should be easy to read from a distance.
- Colors can have different effects: greens, blues, and purples tend to be soothing and calming; red, orange, and yellow tend to excite and attract attention.

Mistakes to avoid

- Visual clutter - it's okay to have a lot of different elements on it, but not so many that it looks junky or chaotic. Be sure that you can look at it from a distance and get at least a general idea of what it's about.
- Unclear or easily misunderstood wording or images - you want the audience to at least get the general idea a first glance. If they have to think too hard about it, they may not take a second look.
- Typos or spelling errors - as with any of your printed materials, you should strive for accuracy and professionalism.
- Bad art, photography, or production values - if your poster looks cheap or shoddy, it can be bad for your team's public image.



Marketing



Email Templates

After creating a poster or flyer, you are ready to start spreading the word! Below are email templates to send to individuals or organizations inviting them to your Teach-In. If you do not receive a response within a week, follow up with a phone call or offer to attend the organization's meeting.

Dear _____,

My name is ____ and I work with [organization] to [organization's mission]. On [date] from [time], we are hosting a Teach-In for youth and adults on mental health to spread awareness around the Bi-Partisan Safer Communities Act through a racial justice and equity lens. This project is called [name of project] and is aimed to educate our communities on the state of youth mental health for what actions we can take to advocate for this federal funding. The event will be at [location]. We hope you can join us for an afternoon of fun interactive presentations, community conversations, connections to local leaders, and action! I have attached a flyer with more information. Please help us spread the word about this exciting event.

Dear _____,

My name is ____ and I work with [organization] to [organization's mission]. On [date] from [time], we are hosting a Teach-In for youth and adults on mental health to spread awareness around the Bi-Partisan Safer Communities Act through a racial justice and equity lens. This project is called [name of project] and is aimed to educate our communities on the state of youth mental health for what actions we can take to advocate for this federal funding. We have noticed that at the local level, elected officials do not explicitly talk about mental health, never mind how mental health affects youth of color. This would be a great opportunity to meet with your constituents, especially with new young voters. [Insert names of local new media] have all been invited to attend. We hope you can join us for an afternoon of fun interactive presentations, community conversations, connections to local leaders, and action!





Social media can be a great marketing tool—especially if you want to reach a larger audience with limited resources. Consider whom you are trying to reach before posting. If your goal is to gain more national attention or share an article or resource related to mental health, Twitter and Instagram are the best platforms to use. Keep in mind that on Instagram, engagement is higher if you utilize “Instagram Stories” along with posting photos on your feed and using popular hashtags. Feel free to get creative by making the statistics relevant to your community, using your hashtags, and tagging key stakeholders in your online community.

Below are examples of social media posts that can be used to advertise your event:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 14% of 10-19 year-olds experience mental health concerns. Many of these concerns go unrecognized and untreated. Join us on [date/time/location]. Let’s create solutions together.
- In 2018, 58.2 percent of Black and African American young adults 18-25 and 50.1 percent of adults 26-49 with serious mental illness did NOT receive treatment. [date/time/location]. Let’s take action together.
- Poverty level affects mental health status. Black or African Americans living below the poverty level, as compared to those over twice the poverty level, are twice as likely to report serious psychological distress. Join us on [date/time/location].
- A 2021 meta-analysis surveyed 80,879 youth worldwide and found that depression and anxiety symptoms increased significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Join us on [date/time/location] to learn more.



Press Release Template



[Date, City, State] – We at [name of organization] are excited to present to you our # Teach-in! The Teach-In will be on [date] from [time] at [location]. Admission is free. We are a youth-led advocacy group rooted in justice and equity and our main goal for this teach-in is to inform the community about the Bi-Partisan Safer Communities Act, with a focus on communities of color.

- *add a description of your event*

[Name of organization] is inviting local and state policymakers to this event to talk about the issue of mental health in [city] and share plans to help inform the community about Bi-Partisan Safer Communities Act and provide ways they can help prevent further damage. With this teach-in event, we hope you will leave informed with new or more information than before about combatting the youth mental health crisis.



Sample Agenda



Below is an example of a Teach-In agenda. This agenda is an internal document for those planning and facilitating the event.

3:00 PM: Room set-up

3:45 PM: Welcome and introduction to the project

- Thank you and recognition of funders, food donors, and host (if space was donated)
- Housekeeping: point out food/beverage, restrooms, etc.
- Summarize the mission of the organization
- Provide an overview of the agenda for the Teach-In

3:50 PM: Icebreaker

4:05 PM: Settling in

4:10 PM: Introduce the Bi-Partisan Safer Communities Act

What did you learn?

What questions do you still have about this topic?

4:55 PM: Direct participants to small groups

5:00 PM: Facilitate small groups on how mental health connects with other issues

- Gentrification
- Poverty
- Education Reform
- School to Prison Pipeline

5:30 PM: Debrief small group discussions in a large group

5:40 PM: Introduce Guest Speaker and Action Wall

5:55 PM: Closing

6:00 PM: Networking

6:30 PM: Take down and clean up





Action Steps After Teach-In

- Contact your representatives
- Share your activism on social media by using hashtag # for your event
- Participate in local events around mental health
- Connect with local organizations that are working to combat the issue
- Continue to educate yourself on the issues

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Educational Resources

[Sandy Hook Promise](#) - The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act: What's Next?

[US Department of Education](#) - Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Bipartisan Safer Communities Act

[Every Town for Gun Safety](#) - What is the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act?

[SAMHSA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) - HHS Awards Nearly \$245 Million to Support Youth Mental Health and Help the Health Care Workforce Meet Families' Mental Health Needs

[Highlights of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#)

[Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Section-By-Section](#)



Mental Health Educational Resources



We felt it was important to provide follow-up information to you all that contains resources to help you further your education on the topics of environmental justice, climate change, and systemic racism. These are just a few to get you started and good luck as you journey down this important rabbit hole! :)

Mental Health Documentaries:

- **"The Mind, Explained"** on Netflix is a 2 season documentary that explores mental health issues and how they occur in the brain and body!
- **"Heal"** is a documentary that covers the intersections of mental health and the American healthcare system.
- **"HUSH (Help Us Say Help)"** is a documentary that covers black male mental health, and the stigmas and barriers black men face when they seek out help.
- **Scene On Radio** - a project from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, produced an AMAZING podcast series called Seeing White. It breaks down how whiteness was constructed and what it means to be white in America. (14-part series)

We also wanted to provide a list of NC- based organizations that you can get involved in and donate to. This is not an exhaustive list as we encourage you to continue to research other organizations engaged in this work here in NC. Some of the organization links will take you directly to Charlotte chapters but if you search the organization, many of them have chapters across NC.



Mental Health Educational Resources

Organizations In North Carolina:

1. [Alexander Youth Network](#)
2. [One to One with Youth, Inc.](#)
3. [NAME](#)
4. [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#)
5. [Mental Health America \(Central Carolinas Chapter\)](#)
6. [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
7. [North Carolina Psychiatric Association](#)
8. [North Carolina Behavioral Health Services](#)
9. [Peace of Hope Foundation](#)

Organizations In Mississippi:

1. [Open Up MS](#)
2. [Nami Mississippi](#)
3. [Mental Health MS](#)
4. [Mental Health Association of South MS](#)
5. [Teen Health MS](#)
6. [This is My Brave](#)
7. [MS Adolescent Health Program](#)
8. [Youth Move](#)
9. [MS Family for Kids](#)

