



Counselor Conversation Guide: Talking About Cannabis and Driving

Purpose:

To help students reflect on how cannabis affects driving and make safer choices for themselves and their friends.

Before You Begin

Set the tone:

Keep things relaxed and non-judgmental.

Encourage honesty:

"There are no "right" or "wrong" answers."

"I get confused about all this sometimes. Can we talk things out together?"

Normalize reflection:

"Lots of people are learning about this — we're just talking through what it really means."

"This is all so new. What do you think about it?"

1. Opening the Conversation

Counselor might say:

- "Let's talk a bit about driving and cannabis. I'm not judging you, but let's understand together what's really going on when someone drives high."
- "What comes to mind for you?"



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Ask:

- “What comes to mind when you hear “driving high?”
- “Is driving high different than driving while using cannabis?”
- “This is all so new. What do you think about it?”

Possible student responses:

- “It’s dangerous.”
- “People do it all the time.”
- “It’s not as bad as drunk driving.”
- “My mom/dad/grandpa/grandma/aunt/uncle, etc. says it’s ok.”
- “It’s legal now.”
- “That will never happen to me.”

Counselor follow-up ideas:

- “Why do you see it that way?”
- “Why do you think people see it that way?”
- “Where do you think those ideas come from — friends, media, personal experience?”
- “Do you think you have the power to be an influencer?”

2. Understanding the Effects**Ask:**

- “How do you think cannabis affects your brain and body when driving?”

Counselor might add:

- “Think about things like reaction time, coordination, or focus — what changes when someone’s high?”
- “What do you think would happen if you had messed up coordination or didn’t stay in your lane?”

If students need prompts, share facts:

- Slower reaction time
- Difficulty focusing
- Weaker coordination and judgment
- Delayed decision-making
- Driving difficulties like staying in your own lane or getting lost

Follow-up:

- “How might those changes show up when someone’s behind the wheel?”
- “What do you think would happen if something like that happened to you?”

3. Real-Life Experiences

Ask:



- “Have you seen or heard about someone driving high or while using?”
- “What happened?”

Counselor can clarify:

“This isn’t about naming names or judging your friends — I’m just curious what stories or situations you’ve come across.”

Follow-up:

- “How did it make you feel hearing or seeing that?”
- “What do you think the person was risking?”

If a student mentions a DUI or crash:

- “That’s a tough situation. What kinds of consequences could that person face?”
- “What could happen in addition to an accident?”

4. Looking Beyond the Crash

Ask:



“How could being high or using behind the wheel affect your life beyond a crash?”

If students need examples, offer prompts:

- Fines or legal trouble
- Damage to your reputation
- Losing your license or school opportunities
- Fewer job prospects (especially jobs that require driving)

Follow-up:

- “Which of these matter most to you? Why?”

5. Planning Safer Alternatives

Ask:



- “What could you do if you or a friend feels impaired and still need to get somewhere?”
- “What could you do to stop yourself or your friends from using while driving?”

Encourage brainstorming like:

- Riding with a sober driver
- Asking a sober driver to take over
- Using rideshare apps
- Taking public transit
- Waiting it out until fully sober
- Calling someone for support

Counselor can add:

- “Sometimes it’s about planning ahead — what’s your backup plan before you go out?”
- “What’s your backup plan if something unexpected happens?”

6. Positive Peer Influence

Ask:



- “How can you be an “influencer” for safe choices?”

Counselor can add:

- “Being an influencer doesn’t mean preaching — it can be small things, like offering to drive or suggesting a safe ride home.”
- “You can still have fun – but plan ahead of time.”

Encourage examples:

- Speaking up if someone plans to drive high or while using
- Helping organize safe rides
- Sharing facts with friends
- Setting a positive example



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7. Closing the Conversation

Counselor closing script:

“I really appreciate you being honest about this. It’s not easy to talk about, but it matters. If you’re ever in a situation where you don’t feel safe — whether it’s about driving or anything else — it’s okay to reach out for help or just pause and think before you act.”

Counselor Notes

You can use this worksheet:

- In small group discussions or health class workshops
- During one-on-one counseling sessions or if others call with concerns
- As a reflective exercise for classroom follow-up
- Encourage students to write down their personal “safe choice” commitment at the end



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