



Students for
Sensible
Drug Policy

911 Good Samaritan Policy Guide

Table of Contents	Page
<u>I. What is a Good Samaritan Policy</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>II. Example of a Good Samaritan Policy</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>III. Guidelines for Policy Brief</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>IV. Policy Brief example</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>V. Introducing a Policy Brief</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>1.) Campaign</u>	<u>6-7</u>
<u>2.) Student Government</u>	<u>7-8</u>
<u>3.) Brokering for Change</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>VI. Press Release Example</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>VII. Petition Example</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>VIII. Flyer</u>	<u>11</u>

What is a 911 Good Samaritan Policy?

A Good Samaritan Policy (GSP, also known as a Medical Amnesty Policy) is a policy that saves lives by preventing the hesitation of students during medical emergencies involving alcohol or drugs. Many students are fearful and hesitant to alert authorities during medical emergencies because they fear harsh disciplinary responses to drug and alcohol violations. These hesitations during a life-threatening emergency can be fatal yet prevented. The Good Samaritan Policy provides amnesty and protection from disciplinary consequences for the students involved in a medical emergency in an effort to promote fast action responses.

An effective 911 Good Samaritan Policy has 4 requirements

- Clearly stated, effectively enforced and well known
- Protection of the Victim of a medical emergency, the Caller of medical assistance for the victim, and the Organization that may be associated with the medical emergency
- Amnesty granted for both Alcohol and Drug policy violations
- Educational sanctions that are given priority over disciplinary sanctions

1.) **Good Samaritan Policies are only effective if they guarantee amnesty in writing (usually in the student code of conduct) and the policy is widely publicized.** If a school has the unwritten practice of excusing students from punitive consequences during emergency situations, but students don't know about it, then it is like having no such policy at all.

2.) Protection should cover everyone in a medical emergency in order to reduce hesitation on all fronts. Policies that do not cover all students are ineffective, it is important that protection be given to everyone.

3.) A Good Samaritan Policy that only grants amnesty for alcohol related emergency is not complete and neglects many who suffer from drug overdoses. It is very important that a Good Samaritan Policy covers both drug and alcohol emergencies. **In 2008, drug overdoses caused 36,450 deaths in the United States. Drug overdose is now second only to motor vehicle crashes among the leading causes of unintentional injury deaths.** *Centers for Disease Control. (2011). Vital Signs: Overdoses of Prescription Opioid Pain Relievers – United States, 1999-2008. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 60, 1487-1492.*

4.) This requirement is the main focus of the Good Samaritan Policies. By promoting educational sanctions versus disciplinary ones, students are less reluctant to call for medical assistance as they aren't fearing expulsion or suspension. Also educational sanctions will help the students involved to become more responsible and to learn how to avoid another medical emergency.

So when drafting a 911 Good Samaritan Policy please be sure to include these four important items.

An example of a 911 Good Samaritan Policy: Amherst College

“Because the safety and welfare of students is the college’s priority, the college has instituted a medical amnesty policy. This policy is applicable to the following parties: 1) student requesting medical assistance for oneself; 2) student requesting medical assistance for another person; 3) student for whom medical assistance was provided.

When responding to such AOD (alcohol or drug) violations, the college will consider the student’s decision to request medical assistance, and in most cases, view the act of seeking medical assistance as good judgment, therefore not deserving of the typical range of AOD sanctions. Thus, if it is determined that the medical amnesty policy applies to a situation, the students involved will not be subject to a violation of the AOD Policy. Referral for AOD education still applies, and, in some instances, parental notification.

This policy does not protect students who repeatedly violate college policies. Once a student receives medical amnesty, future amnesty is at the discretion of the Dean of Students’ Office. The Deans also have discretion to determine that this policy does not apply in more serious situations, including criminal possession of drugs, property damage, violence, etc.”

Guidelines for Drafting a 911 Good Samaritan Policy Brief

A policy brief is a short document that outlines and promotes a policy change. Creating a Policy Brief will aid in convincing your institution's administration to change their drug policy. **Create a short and succinct policy brief outlining what a 911 Good Samaritan Policy is and why it is necessary**

- **Be sure to show urgency and course of action**
- **Be professional and not academic, write in a simplistic manner in which all readers can easily understand**
- **Be practical and use statistics for evidence**
- **LAYOUT (Brief should be one page.)**
 - **1st section**
 - **Title of Brief**
 - **Executive Summary – aims to convince the reader that the brief is worth in depth investigation.**
 - **A description of the problem addressed (often in the form of a key policy question the brief is designed to answer)**
 - **A statement on why the current approach/policy needs to be changed**
 - **Your recommendation for action**
 - **2nd section**
 - **Provides a short overview of the root causes of the problem**
 - **How did this issue come to be an issue?**
 - **Provide images and trend data – graphs, charts etc**
 - **3rd section**
 - **Discuss different policy options (Having a GSP vs. Zero Tolerance)**
 - **Evaluations (Outline strengths and weaknesses of GSP)**

911 Good Samaritan Policy Brief Example

A Good Samaritan Policy has the potential to save lives and prevent harm. Across many universities and college campuses, many students participate in underage drinking. This activity can turn dangerous and life threatening without proper policies promoting responsibility. Many institutions attempt to combat illegal underage and binge drinking by enacting harsh zero tolerance policies. These policies intend to punish students who break them with harsh penalties, in order to encourage them not to drink, and these policies usually fail. A Good Samaritan Policy intends to promote health over discipline by providing amnesty for illegal activities such as underage drinking and drug overdose. Students will drink and may put themselves in danger, if they have no fear of punishment they won't hesitate to call for help. Therefore a Good Samaritan Policy provides the best solution for the protection of student health.

The current issue is that Universities and other institutions are taking a faulty approach toward underage drinking and drug use. In order for an institution to put their students health above anything else they need to adopt a Good Samaritan Policy. This policy has been proven effective at protecting students.

- **911 Good Samaritan Policies have been proven to be effective at saving lives.** [A 2006 study in the International Journal of Drug Policy](#) found that emergency calls increased after Cornell University's Good Samaritan Policy was enacted in 2002, although alcohol abuse rates have remained relatively constant.
- **When someone in America overdoses, a call for help occurs less than 50% of the time.**
- **Fear of police involvement is the most common reason for not calling 911 during an overdose.**
- **Students who are aware that a medical amnesty policy is in effect are 2.5 times more likely than students who expect to face disciplinary actions to call for help when witnessing the signs of alcohol poisoning.**
- **After Cornell University implemented a Medical Amnesty Protocol, students were less likely to report fear of getting an intoxicated student in trouble as a barrier to calling for help and alcohol-related calls for assistance to emergency medical services increased.**
- **Washington's Good Samaritan law, 88% indicated that they were more likely to call 911 during future overdoses.**

With a Zero Tolerance policy, students will not stop harmful behavior such as drinking and using drugs, they are just more likely to not call for help when necessary. With a Good Samaritan Policy a student does not have to fear punishment when calling for help and will be more likely to call for emergency services. A Good Samaritan Policy is an important tool to protect student health.

How to Introduce a 911 Good Samaritan Policy at your Institution

1. **INTRODUCTION.** The first step to introducing a Good Samaritan Policy is to arrange a meeting with your institution's policy makers. During the meeting, rationally and logically present the proposed policy, be sure to use facts and statistics. One of the most efficient ways is to use a **Policy Brief (pg 4-5)**.

- Making the original ask is important because 1) there's a chance the decision-makers will agree to the demands and you'll save yourself the trouble of having to organize a large and involved campaign, 2) you'll gain credibility among the general public for making a good faith effort, and 3) when you sit down with decision-makers and they deny your request, you can show them some of your ambitious campaign plan and perhaps scare them into trying to negotiate a compromise with you right then and there.

2. **CAMPAIGN.** If the policy makers reject your initial request for a policy change then it is time to campaign. For a successful campaign, you will need others to help and support you. If there is not already a SSDP Chapter at your institution, this is the perfect opportunity to create one. The more members and supporters of your cause, the more likely the administration will change the policy. For information on how to start a chapter please visit: <http://ssdp.org/chapters/start/>

- **Support** - Besides getting individual student members to work on the campaign, you should also try to get the organizations to officially endorse the policy changes you want to make, since it will boost your campaign's authority and effectiveness to have a large, diverse list of supporters. It's also helpful to reach out beyond campus to local and statewide organizations, such as ACLU chapters. These groups can bring credibility and resources to the campaign that you wouldn't otherwise have. You can also ask your professors if they'll let you make a quick announcement at the beginning or end of classes. Yet another way to identify your supporters is to hold a community forum for people to share their thoughts on the campus' drug policies. Other influential individuals you'll want to reach out to include alumni, trustees, donors, state and local elected officials, and parents.
- **Advertising** - To win over the campus community, you're going to have to let them know what the issues are and why they should agree with you. One of the early things you should do is flood the campus with some flashy, eye-catching flyers that clearly and concisely convey the importance of policy change. The flyers should include contact information so that people who want to get involved with the campaign can find out more about it. You might want to include your phone number and email address, a website URL, or the time and date of a meeting that people can go to. You can hang these flyers up in academic buildings, dorms, the student union, and dining halls. Smaller, quarter-page flyers are also helpful, as they can be easily passed out at events, in classes, or on the campus green. **Press Releases** are also a very simple yet effective way to raise awareness (pg.

9).

- **Lists and petitions** (see pg. 10) - These will also help to gain more supporters and show the administration how serious this policy change is. When you have a comprehensive electronic list of your supporters, you'll be able to easily mobilize them when it's time to act. A good way to build your list is to get people to sign petitions that ask them to put down their e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and screen names. You can also incorporate a sign up form on your campaign's website, if you have one. When it comes time to mobilize people, you'll be able to send out a blast e-mail that concisely outlines what you need them to do and when you need them to do it. If you're organizing a large rally or protest, you can also put together a "flash mob." This involves sending out a mass text message to all your supporters' cell phones right before you want them to gather. If you have hundreds or thousands of folks on your list, even a very small response rate can result in lots of people showing up.

- **Lobbying for change** – A major goal of your campaign is to make students' voices heard by those that need to hear them. While many students will agree with your position, most of them will probably feel too busy to contribute lots of time and energy to the campaign. Thus, you'll need to make it as easy as possible for them to speak out and send messages to the decision-makers responsible for setting the campus drug policies. This tactic is called grassroots lobbying, and it is extremely effective in amplifying your concerns.
 - Phone slam - A method that floods decision-makers offices' with dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of phone calls. You can make this happen by printing thousands of quarter-page flyers that have phone numbers and sample scripts on them. You can distribute these by setting up tables in a high-traffic area of campus, such as the student union or the green.
 - Email flood - A method that floods decisions-makers emails with a demand for change. You can either distribute administrators' e-mail addresses and ask students to draft their own messages and send individual e-mails, or you can set up an online action alert center where students simply enter in their contact information and e-mail messages are automatically generated.

3.) **STUDENT GOVERNMENT** - One easy and effective way to demonstrate the student body's opposition to bad campus drug policies is to have your student government pass a resolution calling for reform. This will not only send a message to decision-makers, but it is likely to generate media interest as well. If you can't seem to get the student government on your side right away, a long-term strategy is to take over the body by running a slate of candidates on a students' rights platform. If you can get the faculty government to pass a resolution calling for policy change, it is sure to get decision-makers' attention.

4.) **BROKERING** - Now it is time to bring your policy change to the administration. Hopefully your campaign will be successful and you'll be able to get the decision-makers to agree to meet you at the negotiating

table. Obviously, you'll want all of your demands to be fully met, but it's more likely that you'll need to compromise and meet the decision-makers somewhere in the middle. You're going to have to be careful to not let them take advantage of you and trick you into agreeing to something you don't really want. You'll also have to make sure you're accurately portraying and defending the concerns of the coalition you are representing. Make sure not to sign off on a deal that will alienate any part of your coalition. In any case, you'll want to start by asking for exactly what you want. Then, if necessary, you can work your way down to a mutually acceptable compromise.

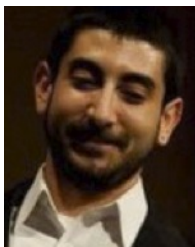
Be sure to contact your [Outreach Director](http://ssdp.org/about) (ssdp.org/about) so the SSDP National Office can help you with every step

For more information on Good Samaritan Policies and how to create one for your Institution please visit : <http://ssdp.org/campaigns/call-911-good-samaritan-policies/>

Or Scan our QR code:

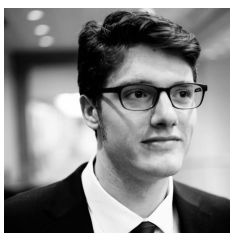


Be sure to contact your [Outreach Director](http://ssdp.org/about) (ssdp.org/about) so the SSDP National Office can help you with every step



Drew Stromberg is our Outreach Director for the Mid-Atlantic, Southern, and Mountain Plains regions and our International Network, where he tracks, advises, and develops chapters and student leaders into effective policy reformers.

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Devon Tackels is our Outreach Director for Midwest, Northeast, and Western regions. Devon got involved with drug policy reform when he founded the SSDP chapter at Virginia Commonwealth University, in 2008, and now serves SSDP's chapter network to help identify and develop leaders and drug policy reform activists on college campuses. (Devon@ssdp.org)



Press Release Example

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Washington, DC. 20004

Phone: (202) 393-5280

www.ssdp.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [date]

CONTACT: [Activist Name], [school] SSDP – (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxxxxxxx@xxxx.edu

Devon Tackels, SSDP National – (202) 293-5280 or devon@ssdp.org

[School] Students Call On Administration to Save Students' Lives

Good Samaritan Policy Aims to Prevent Drug Overdoses

CITY, ST – [School] students are calling on the school's administration to encourage students involved in potential drug overdose situations to call for medical help by granting them amnesty from campus drug penalties. Members of Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) have pledged to work with student and faculty leaders to craft a policy that promotes responsible action during life-threatening situations.

“Overdose deaths happen on college campuses constantly, and many of them can be prevented if we smarten up,” said [activist], [title] of [school] SSDP. “In life or death situations, students need to be guaranteed by administrators that a call for help won’t get them in trouble. Otherwise, panicked students may hesitate to call for help, which could result in dire consequences for someone overdosing on alcohol or other drugs.”

Many [school] faculty members agree. “The administration needs to ask themselves what’s more important: saving students’ lives or punishing them,” said [supportive professor]. “An increasing number of colleges and universities have enacted ‘good samaritan’ policies. [School] should follow their lead and encourage students to protect their classmates’ health and safety.”

For the full text of the proposal and for more information visit [campaign website].

Students for Sensible Drug Policy is an international grassroots network of students who are concerned about the impact drug abuse has on our communities, but who also know that the War on Drugs is failing our generation and our society. SSDP mobilizes and empowers young people to participate in the political process, pushing for sensible policies to achieve a safer and more just future, while fighting back against counterproductive Drug War policies, particularly those that directly harm students and youth.

(Note to activists: This release is provided only as an example. A release structured like this one may not be appropriate for all situations, but feel free to use it as a model for writing your own

releases.)

Example Petition

We, the undersigned students, faculty, and staff, strongly urge [school] to enact a good samaritan policy that encourages students to call the paramedics in the event of medical emergencies. Currently, students are deterred from calling for help in potential drug overdose situations because they are afraid of being punished under the university's drug policies. [School] should bring itself in line with many of the top universities in the country by guaranteeing judicial amnesty to students who have the good sense to call for help when it is needed. This would save students' lives and promote health, safety, and responsibility on campus.

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**Calling for
help shouldn't
be a crime.**



**Help save lives. Support
Good Samaritan Policies.**