

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Chris Herren, former professional basketball player, author and wellness speaker, is scheduled to speak to our student body on [DATE].

We are sending this communication home to inform you of the presentation date and invite parents and guardians to initiate a conversation with your student following this impactful student assembly. Chris Herren, was a high school All-American basketball star from Fall River, Massachusetts who went onto a career in the NBA with the Denver Nuggets and the Boston Celtics. As a high school student, he was living every high school athlete's dream on the outside, but the overwhelming pressure and expectations that come with small town fame was a heavy burden on his inner world.

Like so many teenagers, Chris turned to alcohol to cope with his intense emotions. Alcohol use led to other substances, and eventually, to a substance use disorder. Addiction ultimately ended his career.

Chris Herren's journey was documented in the ESPN FILMS 30 for 30, *UnGuarded*, which aired on ESPN in 2011 and captures Chris's story and how he attained recovery. In 2019, Chris Herren teamed with filmmaker Jonathan Hock again to film *The First Day* which focuses on what Chris learned on his journey of recovery since he committed himself to sharing his story with young people.

After years of speaking in schools across the country, Chris has come to believe that it is more important to share with students what leads to the first day of substance use rather than to focus on the last days of addiction. In doing so, he believes students can begin to learn to cope with their own stressors and pressures in healthier ways, be more compassionate to their peers who may be struggling, and understand that help is available to those who need it. The film captures his powerful gift for storytelling. By honestly sharing his own vulnerabilities and the hard lessons he has learned, he makes profound connections with students who, in turn, have shared their stories of struggle and strength.

After the student assembly, your student may have questions or simply want talk about the presentation. To help you make the most of this opportunity to connect with your child in an effective way about this important topic, the **Partnership to End Addiction** and **Herren Project** are national organizations with programs to support families working to prevent or respond to substance use. These organizations have many resources that can be accessed for free to help you learn more about youth substance use and the risks for addiction, how to have positive and productive conversations with your son or daughter about these issues, and how to get support and help if you are already worried about your child's substance use behaviors or addiction.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child participating in this event, please contact [CONTACT AT SCHOOL]. We will have additional student outreach resources available throughout the school day.

Sincerely,

TEXT MESSAGE

On [DATE], our school will have Chris Herren present to our students, the first-hand story of a basketball star's experience with substance use. Visit herrentalks.com for information about Chris Herren and how you can support your son or daughter following the presentation.