



October 14, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) ask every American to join us in commemorating Red Ribbon Week, October 23-31, 2026, and supporting Red Ribbon activities throughout the month of October.

In 1985, Special Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by drug traffickers. From the heartbreak over his death grew a commitment by young people to remain drug-free and reduce demand for cartels' poisonous products. In Kiki's hometown of Calexico, California, teens started wearing red ribbons in his memory. This effort quickly gained momentum across the country. The National Family Partnership turned Red Ribbon Week into a national drug awareness campaign. Every year since, Red Ribbon Week has been celebrated in schools and throughout communities.

Red Ribbon anchors DEA's efforts in drug prevention, education, and community outreach. DEA works tirelessly throughout October to promote community safety and encourage healthy, drug-free lifestyles in the spirit of Red Ribbon. Initiatives include the following, and details on each are available at www.dea.gov/redribbon:

- **Go Red for Red Ribbon:** Illuminating or decorating buildings and landmarks in red during the week of October 23-31.
- **Red Ribbon Campus Video PSA Contest:** DEA and SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) co-sponsor
- **Red Ribbon Week Photo Contest:** DEA and the National Family Partnership co-sponsor this contest
- **2026 Virtual National Red Ribbon Rally**

SAMHSA's CSAP is committed to prevention throughout the year and identifies Red Ribbon as a special opportunity for communities to mobilize young people, schools, families, and others to recognize the risks of substance use and make healthy choices. CSAP's initiatives, which can be found at <https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/prevention/campaigns-events>, include:

- **Talk. They Hear You.®:** A national substance use prevention campaign that helps parents and caregivers, educators, and community members get informed, be prepared, and take action.
- **Screen4Success:** A 10-minute screening to look for signs of risk in yourself, your child, or those you care about.
- **Communities Talk to Prevent Alcohol and Other Drug Misuse,** which offers resources to communities to host local events that prevent misuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Every action, large or small, to prevent substance use helps build a better future for individuals, families, and our nation. On behalf of the thousands of agents and employees of our agencies who work every day to prevent and mitigate the scourge of substance use, we express our appreciation for your efforts during the commemoration of Red Ribbon in 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terrance C. Cole".

Terrance C. Cole
Administrator
DEA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Westlake".

Timothy Westlake, M.D., FACEP
Chief of Staff
SAMHSA