
**IV. SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

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Why Prevention Is Important

For more than a century, the public health approach to prevention has enhanced the quality of life for millions of Americans. For example, vaccines, improved sanitation, and pure drinking water now regularly prevent many contagious and often lethal diseases. Today, the power of prevention is being used to help prevent, delay, and/or reduce disability from chronic disease and illness, including substance abuse and mental illnesses, which take a toll on health, education, workplace productivity, community involvement, and overall quality of life.

That is why President Bush has called on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to realize his vision of a healthier United States, in which its citizens use the power of prevention to help them live longer, healthier lives. HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson noted that:

“Approximately 95 percent of the \$1.4 trillion we spend on health goes to direct medical care services. An estimated 4 percent is allocated to preventing disease and promoting health. This approach is equivalent to waiting for your car to break down before taking it in for maintenance. By changing the way we view our health, we can move from a disease care system to a true health care system.”

Over the last 20 years, prevention science has produced an increasing number of evidence-based programs and practices that prevent substance abuse and mental health problems, promote mental health, and prevent related problems in communities by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors. Yet, the knowledge of researchers often is not translated into behaviors and practices by individuals and communities or by State and Federal agencies. The result is an *un*healthy United States with catastrophic health care costs, lost education and employment, and lost lives. Separate funding silos and the absence of a common strategic prevention framework have hindered the kind of cross-program and cross-system approach that true health promotion and disease prevention demand.

A Strategic Prevention Framework: Moving Science to Service

To improve the rate at which prevention science is used by State agencies and local communities, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is implementing a new Strategic Prevention Framework based on the public health approach. The Framework is grounded in the agency's vision of a life in the community for everyone and in its mission to promote resilience and to facilitate recovery. SAMHSA Administrator Charles G. Curie believes that, with focused and sustained leadership, States and communities can indeed prevent many mental health- and substance abuse-related problems, promote mental health, enhance resilience, and foster the recovery of people living with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework is a public health approach that supports the delivery of effective programs, policies, and practices to prevent mental and substance use disorders and to promote mental health. This approach can be embraced by multiple agencies and levels of government that share common goals. It emphasizes developing community coalitions; assessing problems, resources, and risk and protective factors; developing capacity in States and communities; implementing evidence-based programs with fidelity; and monitoring, evaluating, and sustaining those programs. It insists upon:

- *Accountability*—measuring and reporting program performance and results
- *Capacity*—increasing infrastructure, service availability, and knowledge to select, implement, monitor, and evaluate evidence-based programs, policies, and practices with fidelity
- *Effectiveness*—improving service quality by implementing evidence-based programs, policies, and practices that work within a broader system of services as well as sustaining system and program effectiveness over time

The Framework provides an effective prevention process; a direction; and a common set of goals, expectations, and accountabilities to be adopted and integrated at all levels of endeavor. This approach to promote a healthier United States is long overdue—not only in mental health promotion and the prevention of substance abuse and mental illness, but in many other aspects of healthy behavior and healthful living.

SAMHSA has already begun to model the use and implementation of the Framework in its prevention activities as it continues in its primary role in prevention to build accountability, capacity, and effectiveness in States and communities. In doing so, SAMHSA will continue to award grants and contracts and to provide technical assistance to States, social service agencies, primary care providers, workplaces, schools, faith-based institutions, and other community-based organizations. These efforts will allow these organizations to put the Strategic Prevention Framework into action—moving it from vision to reality to accomplish SAMHSA's goal of a meaningful life in the community for everyone.

To achieve these goals, SAMHSA must continue to collaborate with a wide range of partners. Since every sector of society benefits from effective health promotion and prevention, prevention must become a collective responsibility across agencies and levels

of government, across agencies within communities, and across communities within States. SAMHSA must harness the power of collaborations with partners to develop a comprehensive prevention system. Building partnerships and leveraging resources are critical not only to promoting a comprehensive approach, but also to achieving sustainability for long-term prevention success. SAMHSA acknowledges the important roles that States and communities play in implementing the Strategic Prevention Framework by (1) assessing needs, risk and protective factors, and resources; (2) mobilizing leadership and building capacity; (3) developing a strategic plan; and (4) implementing evidence-based prevention strategies.

Principles of the Strategic Prevention Framework

The Framework is based on six critical principles:

1. Prevention is an ordered set of steps along a continuum to promote individual, family, and community health; prevent mental and behavioral disorders; support resilience; foster recovery; promote treatment; and prevent relapse. Prevention activities range from deterring diseases and behaviors that contribute to them, to delaying the onset of disease and mitigating the severity of symptoms, to reducing the related problems in communities. The concept is based on the National Institute of Medicine’s model that recognizes the importance of a whole spectrum of interventions—from universal strategies to prevent or delay onset of substance abuse and mental disorders to the treatment of those disorders.
2. Prevention is prevention is prevention. The common components of effective prevention for the individual, family, or community within a public health model are the same, whether the focus is on preventing or reducing the effects of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, substance abuse, or mental health problems. Moreover, many programs based on this public health model have long been known to have a positive impact on conditions other than those specifically targeted. For example, programs to stop teenage smoking not only have an immediate benefit for the adolescent and his or her family, but they also are likely to have a positive effect in later years in the prevention of heart disease, cancer, and emphysema.
3. Common risk and protective factors exist for many mental health and substance abuse problems. Good prevention focuses on changing common risk factors that can be altered. For example, family conflict, low school readiness, and poor social skills increase the risk for conduct disorders and depression, which in turn increase the risk for adolescent substance abuse, delinquency, and violence. Protective factors such as strong family bonds, social skills, opportunities for school success, and involvement in community activities can foster resilience and mitigate the influence of risk factors. Risk and protective factors exist in the individual, the family, the community, and the broader environment.
4. Resilience is built by developing assets in individuals, families, and communities through evidence-based health promotion and prevention strategies.

Relationships with caring adults, good schools, and safe communities help children develop optimism, good problem-solving skills, and other assets that enable them to rebound from adversity and achieve a sense of mastery, competence, and hope throughout their lives.

5. Systems of prevention services work better than service silos. Working together, researchers and communities have produced a number of highly effective prevention strategies and programs. Implementing these strategies within a broader system of services increases the likelihood of successful, sustained prevention activities. Collaborative partnerships enable communities to leverage scarce resources and make prevention everybody's business. National prevention efforts are more likely to succeed if partnerships with States, communities, and practitioners focus on building capacity to plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, and sustain effective prevention.
6. Baseline data, common assessment tools, and outcomes shared across service systems can promote accountability and effectiveness of prevention efforts. A Strategic Prevention Framework can help Federal agencies, States, and communities to identify common needs and risk factors, adopt assessment tools to measure and track results, and target outcomes to be achieved. A data-driven strategic approach, adopted across service systems at the Federal, State, community, and service delivery levels, maximizes the chances for future success and for achieving positive outcomes.

From Vision to Practice: The Strategic Prevention Framework in Action

Moving SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework from vision to practice is a five-step process that community stakeholders must undertake, supported by State leadership and capacity building. The five steps that follow provide the building blocks States and communities can use to implement effective prevention activities.

1. Assessment: Profile population needs, resources, and readiness to address the problems and gaps in service delivery. The health issue confronting the community or State—in SAMHSA's case, substance abuse and mental illness prevention and early intervention as well as mental health promotion—must be assessed accurately through the collection and analysis of epidemiological data. The data should include the magnitude of the problem to be addressed, where the problem is the greatest, risk and protective factors associated with the problem, community assets and resources, gaps in service and capacity, and readiness to act.
2. Capacity: Mobilize and/or build capacity to address needs. Engagement of key stakeholders is crucial to planning and implementing successful prevention activities that will be sustained over time. Key tasks include convening leaders and stakeholders, building coalitions, and training community stakeholders to help sustain the activities. Working together, stakeholders can develop the

necessary social capital to prevent many problems and manage a resilient response to adversities.

3. Planning: Develop a comprehensive strategic plan. The strategic plan not only articulates a vision for the prevention activities, but also organizes prevention efforts. Among other elements, it describes key policies and relationships among stakeholders as well as incentives for public and private service systems to engage in creating a seamless continuum of care. Moreover, it describes the evidence-based policies, practices, and programs (or processes for selection) that will be implemented within the broader service system. Further, the strategic plan identifies key milestones and outcomes against which to gauge performance, thereby allowing for system improvement and accountability of all parties involved.
4. Implementation: Implement evidence-based, resilience-building prevention programs. Supported by training and technical assistance, local stakeholders select programs, policies, and practices proven to be effective in research settings and in communities. Community implementers work in partnership with program developers to ensure that culturally competent adaptations are made without sacrificing the core elements of the program.
5. Evaluation: Monitor process, evaluate effectiveness, sustain effective programs, and improve or replace those that fail. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential parts of the strategic plan to determine if the outcomes desired are achieved and to assess program effectiveness and service delivery quality. They also can identify successes and encourage needed improvements to achieve lasting positive results and sustainability. The issue of program sustainability should be a constant throughout each step of planning and program implementation and should lead to the creation of a long-term sustainability strategy.

Implementing the Strategic Prevention Framework at SAMHSA

To succeed, the Strategic Prevention Framework must be adopted by key stakeholders at the national, State, and local levels as well as by SAMHSA staff collaborating with Federal and national partners working toward a healthier United States. To that end, SAMHSA is providing leadership by:

- Bringing its prevention activities under the umbrella of the Framework, aligning them, and strengthening them. Such alignments leverage existing resources, both within SAMHSA and with its Federal, State, and local partners.
- Encouraging the use of the Framework while simultaneously providing States and communities with flexibility, tempered by accountability.

- Modeling collaborative behavior by working with the public and private sectors and with prevention networks to coordinate service systems at the national, State, and local levels.
- Promoting the use of effective policies and evidence-based programs, assessing effectiveness, and promoting sustainability of effective prevention programs and initiatives.
- Building capacity for prevention throughout the Nation through grants, contracts, training, and technical assistance to States and communities to help them operationalize the Framework.

The SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework helps foster common prevention policy, program, and data realignment across its three centers. This realignment, in turn, fosters collaboration, decreases duplication, leverages resources, and promotes accountability. SAMHSA already has many projects that are compatible with the Framework, and it is adapting other activities to meet the demands of the Framework.



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