

Prevention Principles

Prevention principles include the common elements [found in research¹ that identify effective prevention practices. This list may be used to guide the thinking, planning, selection, and delivery of your efforts. If a community already has a prevention program or strategy in place, these principles may be used to assess the program's potential effectiveness.

1. Prevention efforts must address the risk and protective factors associated with the problem, e.g. substance use. (*Note: some primary prevention strategies may address several problem behaviors simultaneously.*)
2. Prevention efforts must begin early before problems arise; they anticipate times of challenge and crisis. Prevention planning includes early interventions and planning for life and school transitions, when problems typically arise.
3. Prevention efforts need to be reinforced over time. Considerations: exposure duration (time), dosage (how often) and follow-up efforts.
4. Information alone doesn't change behavior. (Showing consequences in a "scare tactic" format has only a short term impact.) Information needs to be combined with other prevention strategies, *see principle 10, below.*
5. People at different levels of risk, need different kinds of prevention *or intervention* strategies. (*Note: the inter-relationship of problem behaviors*)
6. Prevention efforts need to be appropriate for age, gender and cultural backgrounds.
7. Prevention planning needs to involve "stakeholders" (people who care about the issue) - - in ways that have meaning for them.
8. Prevention efforts must include the community - family, schools, business, faith, community groups & individuals, not just one organization.
9. Prevention efforts that incorporate resiliency and positive youth development approaches, emphasize:
 - supportive relationships and connectedness
 - skill building and some recognition of success
 - activities that are challenging and meaningful
10. Community-based prevention efforts are most effective when a combination of strategies are used and coordinated
 - Public Information
 - Alternative, meaningful activities
 - Environmental approaches*
 - Education/skill building
 - Community capacity building
 - Individual support and referral

Environmental Approaches aim to change, norms, perceptions, policies, Practices or laws within an organization or community.

¹ These principles emerged from research supported by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention 2001 (CSAP); National Institute of Drug Abuse 2003 (NIDA); National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2002). *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. The principles are consistent with the Critical Elements of Successful Youth programs cited in the *Alaska Adolescent Health Plan 1995*