

What is Prevention: Environmental Factors

Prevention efforts focusing on the environment aim to build communities that protect adolescents from early substance use.¹

All of the key sectors within a community come together to build coalitions and comprehensive strategies that reduce **risk factors** for substance misuse and addiction,¹ such as high rates of poverty, social norms and drug availability,² and counterbalances them with **protective factors**, such as community engagement and healthy activities.¹

Coalitions bring partnerships to communities and each sector supports prevention efforts.³

These strategies vary based on the unique needs of a particular community, and can include:

- **changing social norms around substance use through awareness campaigns,**
- **educating people of all ages about the disease of addiction**
- **and teaching adults how to recognize the signs of substance use and intervene if a young person is struggling.**¹

Community coalitions improve overall community health and increase the likelihood that young people will live lives free of addiction.¹

Prevention efforts also include policies that decrease drug availability – like imposing taxes on alcohol and tobacco, passing laws to regulate prescribing practices, and increase access to evidence-based treatments.⁴

Prevention efforts improve the places where young people spend their time— like schools, public parks, libraries, churches, shopping malls— to promote attachment and community engagement, which reduces the likelihood of substance use.¹

Researchers have found that implementing proven prevention policies would save the US billions of dollars annually.⁵

More importantly, **prevention saves lives.**

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Sources

- ¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse, (NIDA) 2014, Drug Facts: Lessons from Prevention Research <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/lessons-prevention-research>
- ² National Institute on Drug Abuse, (NIDA) 2003, Risk Factors <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-abuse-among-children-adolescents/chapter-1-risk-factors-protective-factors/what-are-risk-factors>
- ³ Surgeon General: Clinical and Community Preventive Services <https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/prevention/strategy/clinical-and-community-preventive-services.html>
- ⁴ American Public Health Association 2015, Prevention and Intervention Strategies to Decrease Misuse of Prescription Pain Medication <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2015/12/08/15/11/prevention-and-intervention-strategies-to-decrease-misuse-of-prescription-pain-medication>
- ⁵ US Dept of Health and Human Services. Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health, 2016 <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-generals-report.pdf>

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