

Tips for Planning Your Event

As you begin planning your organization's or group's involvement in **National Prevention Week**, you'll want to consider the many factors that will help you plan and host an effective event. By clearly identifying the issues and topics your event will address, setting achievable goals and defining success upfront, establishing a clear budget, determining the type and size of event you'll be hosting, and creating a realistic timeline, your organization or group will be able to execute a successful event that strengthens your relationship with the community and connects your efforts to a nationwide health observance.

Here are some ideas on how to work with the daily themes of **National Prevention Week**, whom to include, when and where to conduct your event, and free or low cost ways to get the word out.

National Prevention Week Dates and Themes

SAMHSA encourages communities, organizations and individuals to participate in **National Prevention Week** during the observance's designated dates to focus national attention on behavioral health during this week. However, SAMHSA understands that these dates may not work for every community. When that is the case, organizations may plan an event before or after the official dates of **National Prevention Week**.

The daily themes of **National Prevention Week** highlight behavioral health issues that are essential to SAMHSA's work and priorities for the nation at large. However, there is no requirement to align your **National Prevention Week** events with these themes. Feel free to focus on the area(s) of prevention that best suits you and your community. You also can do events that encompass one or more of the themes.

Whom to Include

Once you know the goals of your event, deciding whom to include becomes a little easier. Consider partnering with other organizations to strengthen your event and maximize attendance. Additionally, if any members of your community can speak about the benefits of substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion, ask them to participate—event attendees may benefit greatly from personal stories or a motivational speaker.

You can also check the National Prevention Week website to see what other events may be happening in your geographic location and build connections in your community or state to increase participation in your event.

Where and When

The type of event you are having and whom you choose to invite will help you determine the appropriate venue. Keep in mind how many people you are inviting and how many people you expect to actually attend. As you determine the date and time, be sure to note if other events are taking place at the same time that may compete with your event.

Consider talking to other local organizations that have hosted events to find out which venues they prefer and to get recommendations for vendor services.

If you want to host an indoor event, you can save costs by considering sites that are free to community organizations. If you are hosting your event outdoors, be sure to have a back-up location or rain date in case of inclement weather. Outdoor venues often require permits, so be sure to secure any necessary permits in advance.

Keeping Success and Outcomes in Mind

It may seem counterintuitive to think about the intended results of your event before you've even begun to plan it. However, deciding what a successful event looks like or what you want to achieve through your **National Prevention Week** event will help you determine the type of activity or event that best suits your needs.

For example, your goals and measurable outcomes may be short- and/or long-term and include:

- Raising awareness of your organization, as measured by placement of media pieces about your **National Prevention Week** events or activities that will be seen by hundreds of people.
- Fundraising through independent donors and partners, as measured by donations.
- Increasing community awareness about ways to get involved in preventing substance abuse and mental disorders through educational events, as measured by attendance, enrollment in community programs, and recruitment of volunteers.
- Reducing problem behaviors, as measured by the implementation of social hosting policies or other types of behavioral health legislation.
- Educating community members through the development of a new publication or product, as measured by distribution and/or downloads of the product.

- Expanding your organization's reach over time by collaborating with local partners on joint programming, as measured by total reach and attendance, number of events, and/or information from customer feedback surveys.

Determining your ultimate goals upfront will help your organization or group plan an event that achieves meaningful short- and long-term outcomes.

Budget

It's important that you align your goals with an event plan that meets your needs and fits within your budget.

As you're planning your event, think about the power of in-kind support and volunteered time. When contacting local vendors and organizations with requests, consider offering to volunteer your time in return for a service or rental space for your event. Your willingness to help clean a community center or plant flowers in a garden may open the doors to a trade, such as a few hours of free time at a venue that would otherwise be beyond your budget.

Organizations with any budget can make a difference during **National Prevention Week!**

Tell SAMHSA about your event! Please provide the following information to SAMHSA's National Prevention Week Coordinator, David Wilson, at david.wilson@samhsa.hhs.gov, and SAMHSA will post your event information on the National Prevention Week Events Web page:

- Your organization's name and website address
- A brief description of your event(s)
- Topics addressed by the event
- Target audiences
- Date and time
- Venue name and address