



Prevention Collaboration in Action

Identifying Needs and
Opportunities for Collaboration

21st Century Partners in Prevention

When thinking about engaging partners in prevention programming, a few key players may immediately come to mind, such as parents, educators, and law enforcement. While these more traditional partners remain invaluable, today's continually evolving prevention landscape requires us to think "outside the box" and reach out to new partners.

By collaborating with a diverse range of partners, prevention practitioners can leverage a broad array of expertise and perspectives to build stronger connections with the communities they serve. Embracing this collaborative approach not only expands the reach of prevention efforts but also fosters a holistic approach that addresses the complex interplay of social determinants that contribute to substance misuse and related behavioral health problems.

The following inventory offers a comprehensive list of community stakeholder groups, highlighting the ways that these "non-traditional" partners can enhance prevention activities and deepen their impact. The list has been divided into three categories of partners: health, state and local government, and communities.

HEALTH PARTNERS

- **Community Health Centers:** Community health centers (CHCs) particularly Federally Qualified Health Centers, offer a wide range of health promotion and prevention programs. CHCs reach a large population of people, making them important partners when looking to extend the reach of prevention efforts. CHCs often serve populations that have been historically disenfranchised, making them crucial allies in reducing disparities and promoting health equity in substance misuse prevention. By collaborating with CHCs, prevention practitioners can leverage their expertise in health promotion and prevention to focus on communities experiencing disparities.

- **Emergency Medical Services:** State and local emergency medical services (EMS) provide emergency medical care prior to hospital admittance, making them one of the first points of contact in emergencies related to substance use and misuse. EMS respond to a wide range of emergencies, including drug overdose, drug-related violence, and drunk driving accidents. As first responders, their records may shed light on substance use problems in the community. Partnering with these agencies could provide critical substance use data on emerging drug trends.
- **Health Insurers:** Health insurance providers play a significant and expanding role in prevention efforts. Insurance providers are serving more people than ever and have an investment in keeping subscribers healthy. Prevention is often the key to doing so. By collaborating with health insurers, prevention practitioners can access valuable data insights, financial support for prevention programs, and the potential to reach a wide audience through insurance networks.
- **Hospitals:** As the converging point for a range of health problems, hospitals are often the first to be aware of community health issues, including changes in substance use patterns and substance-related overdoses. Their data can help prevention practitioners understand local conditions and identify disparities. Many emergency departments provide screening, naloxone, and education to opioid overdose survivors, and help to coordinate post-overdose outreach and follow-up. Most hospitals treating trauma patients also have an injury prevention center that focuses on preventable injuries such as traffic-related injuries and deaths, suicide, and drownings. These injury prevention centers may be interested in partnering with substance abuse prevention because of the high correlation between substance use and misuse and preventable injuries.
- **Medical Examiner or Coroner's Office:** Most states, and many counties, require a medical examiner or coroner's report for each person whose death resulted from violence or injury. By partnering with medical examiner or coroner's offices, practitioners gain access to essential data on the consequences of local substance use, including valuable information on drug or alcohol use at the time of death. These collaborative efforts can aid in identifying disparities in substance-related fatalities.
- **Poison Control Centers:** Poison control centers often serve as a first point of contact in cases of prescription and illicit drug overdose. These centers track all the calls they receive, making them valuable sources of information on emerging drug trends and

public health concerns. Additionally, poison control centers often provide educational materials to help prevent overdose, making them strong potential partners in larger substance misuse prevention efforts.

- **Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs:** All states maintain an electronic prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) to track the distribution of federally controlled medical substances. These programs allow health care practitioners to identify and prevent the misuse of prescription drugs by tracking prescriber and patient prescription data statewide. PDMPs possess a wealth of data, though this data is sometimes difficult to access. Partnering with PDMPs to promote substance misuse prevention may facilitate the sharing of important data related to prescription drug misuse and help identify disparities in prescription drug misuse patterns in communities.
- **Primary Care Organizations:** These organizations, such as community health clinics and family medicine practices, see large numbers of patients and serve as a place where various health care providers connect with individuals in a community. A community health clinic, for example, often serves uninsured or underinsured individuals, offering a vital access point for substance misuse prevention services in historically underserved communities. Because prevention is often central to their work, they could be valued partners in promoting messaging to prevent substance use and misuse.
- **Visiting Nurses Associations:** Visiting nurses associations support and promote the work of home health, hospice, and palliative care, particularly serving the elderly and individuals with disabilities. As organizations dedicated to promoting the health of these particularly vulnerable patients, visiting nurses associations can serve as strong partners in promoting substance misuse prevention to patients who may otherwise be isolated from society.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

- **Departments of Children and Family Services:** State departments dedicated to the health and safety of children often provide services to help families better care for their children. Substance use frequently plays a role in cases of child abuse or neglect, making it crucial to collaborate with these agencies.
- **Department of Education:** Departments of education have long served as key players in substance use prevention efforts. Partnering with departments of education can provide access to young people, including those at increased risk for substance misuse and

related behavioral health problems. School-based interventions are also critical components of many comprehensive prevention initiatives. By partnering with departments of education, prevention practitioners can collaborate on prevention programs that not only educate students but also address social determinants of health within educational settings.

- **Department of Human Services:** In recent years, departments of human services have become increasingly important partners in prevention efforts, given their responsibility for Medicare, Medicaid, and state-led health insurance programs. The Affordable Care Act includes provisions for preventive services to be covered at no cost for eligible individuals.
- **Departments or Bureaus of Motor Vehicles:** Each state department of motor vehicles has a designated Office of Highway Safety that funds drunk or drugged driving prevention programs. As state departments or bureaus of motor vehicles (DMV/BMVs) frequently address the dangers of substance use and driving in their driver’s education curricula, partnering with DMVs can be particularly useful in reaching young drivers with messaging to prevent substance use and misuse. DMVs also provide “driving under the influence” (DUI) and “driving while intoxicated” (DWI) programs for those convicted of a DUI or DWI, aiming to educate drivers about the dangers of impaired driving and prevent future violations. Collaboration with DMV/BMVs helps prevention practitioners address health disparities by targeting populations at higher risk for substance misuse-related traffic accidents.
- **Elected Government Officials:** Elected officials have the power to widely publicize and lend legitimacy to substance misuse prevention efforts due to their presence in the public eye. Collaborating with elected officials is crucial for raising awareness of substance misuse prevention and garnering support for prevention initiatives. If you can identify a common goal or priority, the right elected official may even have the political sway to help secure additional funding sources to support your prevention efforts — either by allocating local government funds or by promoting the importance of substance misuse prevention to potential funders.
- **Veterans and Military Organizations:** Many branches of the military, particularly the National Guard, are very interested in supporting community prevention efforts. They also provide access to any military families who may be at increased risk for, or

experiencing, substance use and misuse and other behavioral disorders that can be associated with service-related experience.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- **Community Action Programs, Shelters, and Food Pantries:** These settings provide access to hard-to-reach populations who may be at increased risk of developing substance use disorders, including people who are homeless, pregnant women, and people who are struggling financially.
- **Community-Based Coalitions and Agencies:** Local coalitions and/or chapters of national organizations can provide a unique point of access to specific populations. For example, if looking to address substance use among immigrant populations, a local community organization that provides services to new immigrants would be a critical partner. In addition, partnering with agencies with common or overlapping goals—such as a tobacco control or a mental health coalition—can facilitate coordination across agencies and reduce duplication of effort.
- **Domestic Violence Organizations:** Families experiencing domestic violence are often impacted by substance use and other behavioral disorders. These partnerships provide prevention practitioners with important information about the intersection of domestic violence and substance use, while also granting access to at-risk populations. By working together, prevention practitioners and domestic violence organizations can implement integrated prevention efforts that address both issues simultaneously, promoting safety, well-being, and health equity for affected individuals and communities.
- **Early Childhood Services:** Collaborating with professionals in early childhood provides a unique opportunity to lay a strong foundation for lifelong well-being. This field offers a wide range of stakeholders who can greatly support prevention efforts. For example, early childhood education centers, including preschools and daycare facilities, present a unique platform to integrate prevention messages into the curriculum and engage teachers, parents, and caregivers. By engaging with these stakeholders, prevention practitioners can implement targeted strategies that foster resilience, promote protective factors, and raise awareness about the risks of substance use among young children. Similarly, home visiting programs can be invaluable partners, as they work

closely with underserved or low-income families and can serve as essential touchpoints for referrals and linking families to valuable resources.

- **Employers:** Some employers, particularly employers of young adults and other historically underserved populations, can provide critical access to otherwise hard-to-reach groups. Some employers may also be interested in supporting prevention efforts in the interest of maintaining a healthy and thriving workforce. By collaborating with employers, prevention practitioners can deliver prevention messages, educational programs, and resources in workplace settings. Prevention practitioners can also work with employers to promote recovery-friendly workplaces, which not only provide job opportunities to individuals in recovery but also help reduce stigma surrounding substance use disorders. These workplaces contribute to building compassionate and understanding environments that support workers who are in recovery or have family members with substance use issues.
- **Harm Reduction Organizations:** Harm reduction is an approach that encompasses a spectrum of strategies designed to meet individuals where they are in their substance use journey. It focuses on minimizing the negative consequences of substance use, rather than solely advocating for abstinence. This approach promotes safer practices and provides pathways to health and social services. Collaborating with harm reduction organizations can strengthen prevention efforts in several ways. These organizations provide expertise in harm reduction strategies, education on safer substance use practices, and access to resources like the opioid overdose reversal medication naloxone. They also bridge the gap between prevention, treatment, and recovery services.
- **Local Colleges and Universities:** By coordinating prevention efforts with higher education officials, practitioners can ensure that campus prevention initiatives are in sync with broader community-wide strategies. Such alignment not only strengthens prevention impact but also showcases the institution's commitment to community health and wellness goals. Through these partnerships, prevention practitioners can also leverage the expertise of faculty members and graduate students knowledgeable in the science of mental health and substance use disorders, critical capacities such as evaluation and community assessment, and effective youth outreach strategies.

- **Older Adult Programs:** Programs tailored for older adults offer insights into substance misuse issues affecting this demographic. These partnerships provide prevention practitioners with valuable perspectives and access to older adults who may face unique challenges related to substance use. By collaborating with these programs, prevention practitioners can develop targeted prevention initiatives, provide educational resources, and engage older adults as volunteers in prevention programs. These collaborations promote health equity, address the specific needs of older adults, and reduce disparities in substance misuse.
- **Recovery Organizations:** Most states and jurisdictions now have a statewide recovery organization to organize recovering individuals, families, and friends into a collective voice to educate the public about the value of recovery from substance addictions. Its members are committed to advocating for community efforts that support recovery and prevention.