



Community Substance Use Intervening Variable
and Interventions Planning Report

Surry County All-Stars Prevention Leadership Team
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“Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing.
He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young man paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"
asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out.
If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile?
You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean.
As it met the water, he said,
"It made a difference for that one."

— Loren Eiseley

American anthropologist, educator, philosopher, and natural science writer

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Section 1: Summary

The purpose of this document is to fully define the All-Stars Prevention Group. The group's mission and vision statement, membership instructions and current capacity, as well as short and long-term goals are part of the information contained herein. A listing of the members of the Leadership Board of the All-Stars Prevention Group, along with work they have completed.

There is full disclosure of the assessment and prioritization work the All-Stars Prevention Group completed in the Surry County community. The All-Stars Prevention Group concentrates on work normally handled by a community coalition and is doing the slow work of becoming just that. This document explains the basics of a coalition, why they are so important to a community and some of the work they do as it pertains to substance use disorder.

The report contains information related to the prioritization of intervening variables within Surry County. Intervening variables are those root causes of substance use and addiction within our community as prioritized by the All-Stars Prevention Group Leadership Board. Each section is unique and was driven by needs assessment data completed by the Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery. It is truly reflective of national, state, and local data while achieving a high level of cultural awareness based on the unique needs of our community. The following section summaries provide an excellent review of current work.

Section 2

In section 2, we outline the collective history of the All-Stars team. We review its mission to improve awareness of substance use, as well as our vision for the future. Along with this, we list both short term and long-term goals for our organization. Recent activities that we have hosted are also included. Also in this section, the All-Stars relationship with external groups such as the Strengthening Systems for North Carolina Children (SYNC) and Community Impact of North Carolina (CINC) is expanded upon. The section concludes with listing the individuals who make up the All-Stars Leadership Board.

Section 3

In section 3, we define what a coalition and how to sustain one. We outline the importance of working with a community and discuss the national role of community prevention coalitions. We expand on the importance of cultural competency in coalitions. We also discuss the process of developing comprehensive, complementary, and environmental strategies to initiate community-wide change. Included in this section is also a detailed explanation of prevention science and how we can learn from other communities in regard to what works and what doesn't.

Section 4

Section 4 details aspects that a coalition should be aware of when it comes to substance misuse, including which substances are being used in the community, how they are being consumed, and what the root causes of substance misuse are. It is also important that the coalition understand the consequences of substance misuse. Once they have an understanding of these concepts, they can proceed to finding out how the root causes/risk factors operate in a community.

Section 5

Section 5 begins by outlining the types of intervening variables discussed on a meeting called on May 17, 2022. Each of the intervening variables are then defined. The reader can also observe charts that detail what the All-Stars Leadership Team members deemed the most important and impactful intervening variables are in our community. The various comments made by the members can also be observed in this section in regard to how they believed each variable impacts our community.

Section 6

This section begins by describing each of the various Prevention Intervention Programs recommended by Surry County and the desired outcome of each program. There is then a chart that lists each intervening variable, which indicates whether that variable will be impacted by each of the different Prevention Intervention programs discussed.

Section 7

Section 7 covers the elements and core components of effective-based prevention programs. The delivery of these prevention programs to the community and the various elements associated with that, are expanded upon. Also discussed, is the importance of early intervention in regard to substance misuse, as well as the impact of having a caring adult in a youth's life.

Section 8

Section 8 lists the seven different strategies to affect community change and expands upon them. It highlights the importance of these strategies and discusses when certain strategies might be more effective in some situations than others.

Section 9

The final Section 9 previews implementation and action planning and how strategies will be implemented to accomplish the objectives developed earlier in the current document. Future work will refer to specific (community and systems) changes to be sought, and the specific

action steps necessary to bring about changes in all the relevant sectors, or parts, of the community.

Section 2: Introduction to the Surry County All Stars Community Prevention Group/Coalition

The All-Stars Prevention Group is a community advocacy group developed by the Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery to encourage community members to join our efforts to combat substance use disorder. The meetings started in December of 2020, with 10 people present at the Cracker Barrel in Mount Airy, NC. Initially, the goal was to determine if there was any interest in forming a community outreach group, the impact of substance use on group membership, and by defining substance use prevention. Throughout the next year the group as a community collective by learning and participating in activities such as education/training, community outreach events, and community collaboration efforts. Eventually, after the first four meetings, the group scheduled meetings at the Historic Courthouse in Dobson, NC which is the office location for Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery.

All-Stars continuously recruit members, and all community members are welcome to join at any time. Regular monthly meetings are held with no minimum participation requirements. We just ask community members to do as much as they feel comfortable doing. Currently, the All-Stars membership includes 117 members who have requested to be added to our email correspondence group. The goal of this group is to promote emotional health and wellness, prevent or delay the onset of and complications from substance abuse and mental illness, and identify and respond to emerging behavioral health issues.

Mission: Become part of the solution through promoting awareness, enhancing understanding, and changing perceptions of substance use in Surry County through public advocacy.

Vision: The All-Stars Prevention Group is a calling. Stand up, be counted, protect the innocent, and speak for those who've lost their voice. To get something we've never had, we'll have to do something we've never done.

Short-Term Goals: The short-term goals for the All-Stars Prevention Group:

- To continue to develop into a formal coalition.
- Continuously work in our community doing community outreach/events.
- Find creative ways to help our community members who struggle with substance use disorder.
- Be a voice and helping hand for those community members who have a family member who is suffering from substance use disorder or who have lost their life to substance use disorder.
- Continue to improve knowledge and training capacity for use in the community at large.
- Increase youth involvement and youth centered activities.

Long-Term Goals: The long-term goals for the All-Stars Prevention Group are to be Surry County's most sophisticated substance use coalition, apply for the Drug Free Communities Grant provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and start to engage youth as part of our membership.

Recent activities for the All-Stars Prevention Group include:

- Equality In Action Community Event (Mount Airy, NC)
- Red Ribbon Week
- Mount Airy Christmas Parade
- Mount Airy Halloween Event (Downtown)
- Deterra Drug Deactivation Kit Distribution at Waffle House (Mount Airy, NC)
- Fisher River 20th Anniversary Community Event
- Pilot Mountain Christmas Parade
- Vincent Legacy's Kindness Day
- SAMHSA's "Talk. They Hear You." Parent's Night Out (Pilot Mountain Middle School)
- HopeFest Recovery Celebration
- Fisher River's Easter Egg Hunt (Dobson, NC)
- Dobson Spring Folly (Dobson, NC)
- Addiction Awareness Week (Surry Central High School Dobson, NC)

In March 2022 Surry County was awarded a pilot program hosted by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and UNC-Chapel Hill Injury Research Center. This program, Strengthening Systems for North Carolina Children (SYNC), aims to teach community members how implement process called causal loop diagramming which can identify the risk and protective factors in a community. By identifying what systems are involved with the risk and protective factors, the participants are better equipped to break the cycles of negative behaviors that seem to continue across generations. The All-Stars Prevention Group will partner with community members to work the identified SYNC action plans going forward. These efforts will be interwoven with SYNC team members that will allow for positive community movement.

The All-Stars Prevention Group also partnered with Community Impact of North Carolina (CINC), a statewide prevention support agency. CINC assist communities in North Carolina to develop formal coalitions, train leaders, and provides technical assistance related to prevention efforts while focusing on CADCA Coalition Development models. CINC staff has been involved with The All-Stars Prevention Group since 2021. Continued future work with CINC includes further support for All-Stars for establishment of non-profit status and technical assistance for ensuring Drug Free Community grant readiness.

The All-Stars Prevention Group Leadership Board is led by twelve community members representing a broad subsection of the community. The board includes the following individuals:

Paula Sheets	Parent
Jennifer Sinacore	Business
Melissa Mundy	Parent
Wendy Odum	Harm Reduction
Melissa Hiatt, MPA	Non-Profit
Wallis Atkins	School
Josh Boyles, CPSS	Non-Profit
Charlotte Reeves, MA, CPSS	Local Government
Abriana Vail	Youth
Kelsie Reeves	Youth
Regina Propst, CPS	Primary Prevention
Jamie Edwards, MA, LCAS, CPS, CSI	Addictions Treatment

Section 3: The National Role of Community Prevention Coalitions

The following section was edited from the *Developing the Coalition's Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies and Action Plans Planning Primer* (2021) published by the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America¹.

About Community Coalitions

Community coalitions are oftentimes one of the only groups in a community that is organized to address the entire community environment, in which young people may use alcohol, tobacco, and other substances. Many organizations and individuals can impact the individual and address specific aspects of the environment, but the coalition is the only group that looks comprehensively at the environment, seeking to achieve population-level changes to the entire community. Approaches that target individuals can reach limited numbers of people. Community-based programs that provide direct services to individuals are important partners in a comprehensive community-level response to substance use. Strategies that focus on the availability of the substance and the entire community environment, although more difficult to implement, are likely to impact many more people.

One example of this is information learned by teenagers who attend alcohol prevention classes at school. While important, these individual-focused strategies are limited to those students enrolled in the classes. Chances of keeping youth from using alcohol are greater if those classes are part of a comprehensive strategy that also includes local ordinances that limit billboards and other advertising near local schools, and community-wide policies that mandate responsible beverage service training as part of the alcohol licensing process. These strategies, coupled with increased funding for compliance checks and increased fines for violations to ensure that alcohol retailers do not sell to minors, will have an even greater impact. Such environmental-focused strategies target the substance (e.g., the availability of alcohol) and the environment (e.g., implementing policies to reduce youth access). The role of the coalition is to identify or coordinate the implementation of these comprehensive strategies.

The Importance of Cultural Competence

Effective coalition activities place cultural competence and sustainability at its center, as these key concepts must be incorporated throughout implementation of efforts. Remember that the communities or groups of people affected by the problem coalitions are working on need to be involved in ALL aspects of the work of the coalition, from assessment and planning through implementation and evaluation. The best ideas and plans will fall flat unless solutions to the problems engage the target audience and are culturally appropriate. The coalition's planning process must be open and welcoming to all persons, including representatives from diverse

¹ Planning Primer: Developing a Theory of Change, Logic Models and Strategic and Action Plans. CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/planning-primer-developing-theory-change-logic-models-and-strategic-and-action-plans>

cultural groups. If there are significant racial and ethnic minorities in the community, it is imperative to invite them to the planning process. Nothing can hurt a coalition as much as a situation in which diverse groups feel they were not meaningfully involved early in the planning process. Significant outreach efforts to guarantee that diverse populations are involved.

Sustaining Good Work

Sustaining a coalition requires creating a strong coalition that brings together a community to develop and carry out a comprehensive plan to achieve population-level changes. Sustainability efforts must begin as groups are planning, rather than waiting until six months before the grant period ends to begin thinking about sustaining the coalition's work. The more thought out and methodical coalitions are in developing a plan, the more likely they are to attract funders and local support for future work.

Adopting Comprehensive Strategies for Change

Why and what are Comprehensive Strategies? Changing conditions and behaviors in a community is not an easy task. Think of two major community-wide changes that have occurred in relation to health and safety: seat belts and smoking.

Seatbelts

The effort to increase automobile safety through the use of seatbelts required several key strategies:

- An intensive public awareness campaign ("Click It or Ticket").
- Changes to laws that enable law enforcement to ticket drivers and passengers that are not wearing their seatbelts.
- Changes to automobile design that required manufacturers to install seatbelts in every vehicle.

Smoking

A significant decrease in smoking rates occurred only after a series of strategies were put in place:

- Public awareness campaign about the dangers of smoking and removal of tobacco advertisements from mainstream media channels.
- Decrease in access to tobacco products by placing them behind the counter (or in locked cases) at retail outlets.
- Significant increase in the price through tax increases.
- Limited places to smoke in public through clean air ordinances.

In both these examples, a combination of comprehensive and complementary strategies was required to achieve the community-wide change. The same holds true for changing local conditions identified during assessment processes.

When developing strategies, coalitions should consider the following:

- Develop a unique set of comprehensive strategies for each local condition on our logic model.
- These strategies should seek to change the behavior or condition associated with the local condition on the coalition's priorities.
- The strategies should be based on evidence that they will be effective in your community.
- The strategies should be culturally appropriate – meaning they will be developed to work with the diverse populations in your community.

The strategies should be politically acceptable in your community. For example, if the local condition is “parents hosting parties,” a potential strategy may be a social host ordinance (which is an evidence-based strategy.) However, a social host law may have previously failed or when brought up it was determined by city council members to be a “nonstarter.” In this case, other strategies will need to be identified.

Strategy Selection

There are three key components required to design and select strategies:

- **Environmental Strategies**—Environmental strategies incorporate prevention efforts aimed at changing or influencing community conditions, standards, institutions, structures, systems, and policies. Coalitions should select strategies that lead to long-term outcomes.
- **Evidence-based Strategies**—Programs or policies that have been evaluated and demonstrated to be effective in preventing health problems based on the best-available research evidence, rather than on personal belief or anecdotal evidence.
- **Comprehensive Strategies**—a combination of strategies that, when implemented over time, will achieve a desired outcome.

Comprehensive strategies include a combination of individual and environmental-focused strategies. Environmental Strategies Comprehensive strategies involve implementing both individual-focused strategies and community-wide environmental strategies. For example, numerous education campaigns and public awareness efforts related to heart disease exist. We are encouraged to avoid certain foods, exercise daily, and get regular check-ups. This information is familiar and repeated often, yet we live in a society where heart disease remains an insidious public health problem. So, in addition to information sharing strategies, environmental, policy-based strategies should be utilized. These strategies include expanding

healthy food options in community grocery stores, providing exercise breaks and incentives for employees, establishing smoke-free work and public spaces, and providing smoking cessation coverage in insurance policies. Combined, these strategies will work to address the risk and protective factors related to preventing heart disease more comprehensively than implementing a public awareness campaign alone.

What Are Environmental Strategies?

Grounded in the field of public health, which emphasizes the broader physical, social, cultural, and institutional forces that contribute to the problems that coalitions address, environmental strategies offer well-accepted prevention approaches that coalitions use to change the context (environment) in which substance use and misuse occur.

Environmental strategies:

- Can produce quick wins and instill commitment toward long-term impact on practices and policies within a community.
- Require substantial commitment from various sectors of the community to contribute to sustainable community change.
- Reach entire populations and reduce collective risk of the entire community.
- Create lasting change in community norms and systems that produce widespread behavior change and, in turn, reduce problems for entire communities.

Environmental Strategies – A Definition

Environmental strategies incorporate prevention efforts aimed at changing or influencing community conditions, standards, institutions, structures, systems, and policies.

When a comprehensive, multi-strategy effort is in place, coalitions contribute to achieving population-level change by focusing on multiple targets of sufficient scale and scope to make a difference community-wide. Costs associated with implementation, monitoring, and political action within a community can be considerably lower than those associated with ongoing education, services, and therapeutic efforts applied to individuals. The bottom line is, environmental strategies are effective in modifying the settings where a person lives, which plays a part in how that person behaves.

What are Evidence-Based Strategies?

The coalition's planning model serves as the starting point for deciding what strategies a coalition should implement. Effective planning provides a diagnosis of each community substance use problem with identified root causes and local conditions. This is not unlike a doctor's visit. Doctors do not start with a list of "evidence-based medicines" that have been

proven to work, and then attempt to match this list with patients as they come through the door. Good doctors start by diagnosing a patient's specific symptoms to discover the root cause of the illness, and only then consider treatment options.

Oftentimes, different language is used to describe the range of evidence-based strategies. Determining what practices are "evidence-based" or "practice-based" can be challenging. For clarity purposes, the following definitions are provided:

- Evidence-based
 - Strategies that are based on rigorous research that has demonstrated effectiveness in achieving the outcomes that they are designed to achieve.
- Evidence-informed
 - Strategies that are based on research and prevention science and/or include elements of evidence-based strategies but have not been evaluated or researched on their own to be considered evidence-based.
- Research-based
 - Like evidence-based strategies that are based on rigorous research that has demonstrated effectiveness in achieving the outcomes that it is designed to achieve.
- Evidence
 - Based principles or elements - Evidence-based practices and principles are elements that increase effectiveness across a variety of programs, rather than self-standing programs that can be acquired and implemented. Researchers try to identify these "active ingredients" to increase the likelihood that programs, whether evidence-based or not, will be effective.
- Program or strategy "fit"
 - How well a program or strategy matches, or is appropriate for, the community, organizations, stakeholders, and potential participants (i.e., youth). Appropriate program selection increases the likelihood that the program will be implemented with fidelity, thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving the desired health outcomes.
- Promising practices
 - Practices for which there is considerable evidence or expert consensus, and show promise in improving outcomes, but which are not yet proven by the highest or strongest scientific evidence.

"Evidence of effectiveness" can be collected from one of four places: prevention science, community wisdom, experience and cultural practices, and strategies that have worked in other coalitions and communities.

What is Prevention Science?

Much research specific to youth development and substance use has been conducted within the field of prevention science. The research has produced evidence of strategies that demonstrate effectiveness in reducing substance use and/or addressing specific risk and protective factors that lead to substance use.

Prevention science has some important limitations to consider:

1. Much of the early work in prevention evaluation focused on individual focused strategies targeting school curricula, parenting classes, and afterschool settings where pre- and post-test evaluations can be conducted. As such, there are fewer evaluations conducted on environmental strategies.
2. Policy-based and other large-scale community-wide strategies are inherently difficult to test. For example, evaluation on the implementing of social host laws, or prescription drug storage and disposal campaigns, do not easily lend themselves to experimental investigation – and require complicated and expensive evaluation efforts examining multiple communities and factors.
3. Studies and evaluations on strategies targeting marijuana, prescription substances, and other substances of use have not been available. We will learn more as on-going and new evaluation studies are completed.

Community wisdom, experience, and cultural practices. A second source of evidence is community wisdom, experience and cultural practices. This evidence is generated through case studies, observations, and direct experience. Communities should not discount their own experience and wisdom. If the community has success in earlier efforts, then it should carefully consider this valuable learning when planning future strategies. This form of evidence is extremely helpful in learning from strategies that are implemented in diverse cultures and communities.

Learning from other communities and professions. In addition to looking for evidence in prevention science, coalitions can look to the experience of other communities for evidence of effectiveness for specific strategies. For example, if the evidence of effectiveness of a specific law or policy is not available, coalitions can look at data and outcomes from other communities that have implemented the law or policy in their communities. When looking for such communities, coalitions should find comparable communities that have similar populations, demographics, and characteristics. Coalitions can also learn important “lessons learned” from the communities.

Additionally, evidence adapted from other fields such as strategies addressing teen pregnancy, youth violence, school success, youth suicide, and other concerns can provide valuable information. Additional information can be obtained from business professionals. For example,

a lot can be learned about business use of social media, branding, social marketing and other communication strategies.

Considerations for selecting an evidence-based strategy include ensuring the strategy has been shown effective in:

- Addressing root causes and local conditions on your logic model.
- Working with populations targeted by the strategy and/or identifying ways to adapt the strategy based on the unique characteristics of the target population.
- Being cost effective – are the full costs of implementation identified and does your coalition and community have the ability to obtain the necessary resources?
- Building the coalition and community's capacity to implement and sustain a strategy over the long-term.
- Ensuring the strategy is culturally and politically acceptable within the community – can the strategy be adapted to be successfully implemented in your community?

The Bigger Picture of Prevention Work

One of the key lessons learned in coalition work is that it often takes a combination of comprehensive, complementary, and evidence-based strategies to achieve changes in a community. As we all know, there is no one program that can eliminate substance use in the community. If there was, we would all be implementing the program. There is strong consensus in the field of prevention that it takes a comprehensive response utilizing multiple complementary strategies to reduce substance use.

Comprehensive means that there are enough strategies in place to change each local condition identified on your coalition's logic model. Complementary means that each of the strategies implemented build on each other in a way that impacts the entire targeted community. And, as previously discussed, evidence-based means that the strategies implemented are based on research and experience that has shown the program can successfully achieve the desired changes to each local condition on the coalition's logic model.

There are seven "categories" of strategies that can be used by coalitions to change local conditions. These categories of strategies include:

1. Provide information. One of the most common strategies used in prevention is providing information to community members. The goal of this strategy is to change knowledge and beliefs related to substance use, including accepting that a substance problem exists, understanding the physical and social consequences of substance use, and increasing awareness of what the community is doing to combat substance use.
2. Build skills. In addition to changing what people know, prevention efforts seek to give people new abilities to take action. These skill development efforts cross a broad range of abilities and audiences. Examples include: refusal skills for youth, parenting skills for

caregivers, professional development for teachers, police, youth workers or other support personnel, and advocacy skills for community residents and coalition members.

3. Provide support. Most of us are more likely to act on our knowledge and skills if someone encourages us or participates with us. For example, we know we should exercise more and we may have learned some new exercise skills, but we still may fail to get adequate exercise. However, if we set a time to meet with friends to exercise or our spouse agrees to exercise with us three times a week, then we are more likely to follow through and get the exercise we know we need. Prevention puts this principle into practice in many ways including through peer support groups, alternative activities, and mentoring.
4. Change access/barriers. Let's continue with the earlier example of getting adequate exercise. We know we should exercise. We have skills to participate in different forms of physical activity. We even may have supportive family members or friends who will exercise with us. But what if the tennis courts are only open on weekends, the gym membership is too expensive, or our bike needs repair. Each of these illustrates a barrier. An important strategy in prevention is to ensure that there are no barriers to the behaviors in which we want people to engage, such as healthy after-school activities. Conversely, there should be numerous barriers to the behaviors we are trying to discourage, such as increasing the price of alcohol and limiting the hours during which it can be sold to discourage alcohol consumption.
5. Change consequences/incentives. Providing incentives or increasing penalties has a strong effect on the behavior choices people make. If an employer holds a contest and awards prizes such as a day off with pay to those who meet their exercise goals, then even more people will begin exercising. Information, skills, social support, and access may all be provided by the employer to encourage exercise. For example, an employer may create paycheck stuffers with exercise tips, provide a gym at the workplace, an exercise instructor to build skills, and form employee exercise teams. The addition of incentives will always increase the number of people who participate. Likewise, increasing penalties for behaviors you want to discourage can be effective too, such as increasing fines for providing alcohol to minors or stiffer penalties for selling substances.
6. Change the physical design of the environment. Studies show that if good sidewalks are available and connect to places people want or need to go, and if these sidewalks are reasonably "pedestrian friendly," (such as being offset from the road and having shade) more people will walk every day. No other changes are necessary. Simply change the environment and people's behavior changes. This is true of many behaviors coalitions seek to promote or discourage. Crime can be affected by how the neighborhood is physically designed.

Section 4: Consequences, Problems and Root Causes

The following section was edited from the *Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change Planning Primer* (2021) published by the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America².

Having a clear definition of the community is critical for the community assessment because it defines the areas and jurisdictions about which data must be collected – and just as importantly, who needs to be involved as representatives from the community.

Consequences

Consequences of substance misuse are often the problems that motivate a community to take action. The consequences can include social issues such as violence, crime, or young people dropping out of school. The consequences also include health problems like fetal alcohol syndrome, liver disease, and cancer. The health and social consequences of substance misuse are the long-term outcomes a coalition hopes to address and improve.

Problem/Consumption

Coalitions must understand what substances are being used and the rate of substance use in their community. This includes information on how the substances are consumed, how often, and in what quantities. Student and adult surveys such as state surveys, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), archival data (e.g., data from treatment centers and hospitals) and interviews and focus groups are common ways to measure the problem of substance use and consumption.

Root Causes

Root causes of substance misuse are often called risk and protective factors or intervening variables. Root causes are those conditions in the community, family, peer group, and school that make it more or less likely a person will use substances. Consider the root causes for heart disease. Cigarette smoking can significantly increase the likelihood you might have a heart attack.

Conversely, eating a healthy diet can reduce the risk of heart disease. Root causes (risk and protective factors) also exist for substance use. If alcohol is easily available, peers are using alcohol, and parents appear to approve of alcohol use, a young person is far more likely to drink than if these conditions are not present. Risk and protective factors help answer the question, “why are some people using substances and others not?”

² Assessment Primer: Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change. CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/assessment-primer-describing-your-community-collecting-data-analyzing-issues-and>

Identifying risk and protective factors can help lead to the identification and implementation of individual- and environmental-focused strategies. Prevention science provides a list of research-based root causes that have been shown to exist in diverse populations.

Local Conditions

Once a coalition has an understanding of the root causes within their community, they can begin to explore the local conditions that are creating and maintaining the root cause. It is the coalition's job to seek out solid information that will help them understand the local community environment that increases (or decreases) the risk for substance misuse and target these conditions for change. While the root causes/risk factors are general in nature, local conditions describe what the root cause/risk factor looks like or how it "operates" in the community.

A Point About Data and Triangulation

There is not one piece of data or information that fully describes any given problem, consequence, root cause or local condition. Coalitions must collect multiple pieces of data using different data collection techniques to fully understand each of the elements.

Much like when lost hiking or driving, we need multiple points of reference to "triangulate" our position, we also need multiple points of data to corroborate each other. The same is true for data collection around problem, consequences, root causes, and local conditions. If a coalition wants to collect data around a specific local condition it will need to collect multiple pieces of data.

Section 5: The Local Perspective of the All-Stars Prevention Group

The Leadership Team of the All-Stars Prevention Group was hosted by the United Fund of Surry County at the Historic Moore House on May 17, 2022. The purpose of the called meeting was to review and prioritize community consequences, problems and root causes related to substance use in our community.

The Leadership Team discussed following intervening variables (or influences):

- Social/Community Norms
- Influence of Peers
- Social Availability
- Perception of Harm
- Parents and Family
- Access and Availability
- Retail Availability
- Economic Availability and Resources
- Law and Policy
- Promotion of Use
- Frequency of Substance Use Disorder and Use
- Enforcement and the Courts
- Mediating Resources

Definitions for each of the intervening variables the All-Stars Leadership Team discussed may be found on the following pages.

Social/Community Norms
The social norms approach to behavior change combines lessons learned from a variety of fields including social marketing, sociology, behavioral psychology and evaluation research. Some foundational ideas underlying the social norms approach to behavior change are: • Our perceptions of our peers' attitudes and behaviors have a great influence on our own attitudes and behaviors. • Unfortunately, our perceptions are often inaccurate. We tend to over-estimate the number of our peers who value and make unhealthy choices and under-estimate the number who value and make healthy choices. • If, in a given group or population of people, most people are making healthy choices, but most people believe that their peers are making unhealthy choices, then a social norms marketing campaign may reduce the misperception and further encourage healthy choices.

- Social norms marketing campaigns are based on current, accurate information about the intended audience and adhere, in process and content, to good social marketing principles.

Some important lessons learned in the course of several decades of research include:

- The effectiveness of social norms marketing interventions can be undermined if the overall environment supports and promotes unhealthy choices.
- The effectiveness of social norms marketing interventions can be enhanced if the norms that are promoted reflect a group that the individuals closely identify with.
- Social norms marketing campaigns are perhaps best conceptualized as culture change interventions, taking more than one year to realize the behavioral change effects.

The social norms approach focuses on positive messages about healthy behaviors and attitudes that are common to most people in a group:

- It does not use scare tactics or stigmatize an unhealthy behavior.
- It avoids moralistic messages from authorities about how the target group “should” behave. Instead, it simply presents the healthy norms already existing in the group.
- It builds on the assets already in the community, through participation by community members, and by highlighting those who make healthy choices.

Source: Boston University School of Health (2016)³.

Norms and values can be defined as informal social rules defining acceptable and unacceptable behavior within a social group, organization, or larger community. Norms reflect general attitudes about substance use and societal expectations regarding the levels and types of consumption considered acceptable. What is considered acceptable behavior may vary according to the location, occasion, and across communities.

Source: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2021)⁴.

³ Social Norms and the Health of Populations. SPH. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.bu.edu/sph/news/articles/2016/social-norms-and-the-health-of-populations/>

⁴ Assessment Primer: Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change | CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/assessment-primer-describing-your-community-collecting-data-analyzing-issues-and>

Influence of Peers

Greater misuse of prescription drugs by peers, and peer attitudes favorable toward substance use have both been associated with increased prescription drug misuse. Adolescents have a moderate to strong influence impact on their peers' risk behavior. Adolescents are susceptible to peer influence in that it has been observed that they are more likely to engage in risk taking in groups than alone. Adolescents, with their limited degree of self-reliance, which interferes with their ability to act independently of the influence of their peers, may be more easily swayed towards engaging in risky behavior. Impulse control or sensation seeking by adolescents also plays an important role in the degree to which they might engage in risk taking behavior. Greater misuse of prescription drugs by peers, and peer attitudes favorable toward substance use have both been associated with increased prescription drug misuse.

Source: International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (2013)⁵.

During the elementary school years, children usually express anti-drug, anti-crime, and pro-social attitudes. However, in middle school and later, as others they know participate in such activities, their attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. This acceptance places them at higher risk. Another aspect is the perception of risk of harming themselves if they use specific drugs. Young people who do not perceive drug use to be risky are far more likely to engage in drug use.

Source: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2021)⁶.

Social Availability

The more available alcohol or drugs are in a community, the higher the risk that young people will abuse these substances. Even perceived availability is associated with risk; i.e., in schools where children think that drugs are more available, a higher rate of drug use occurs. Social availability analysis explores the settings, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, in which social relationships occur. This type of analysis seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with substance use. Availability means having the perception that prescription and other drugs are readily available, which is

⁵ Loke, A., & Mak, Y. (2013). Family Process and Peer Influences on Substance Use by Adolescents. International Journal Of Environmental Research And Public Health, 10(9), 3868-3885. doi: 10.3390/ijerph10093868

⁶ Assessment Primer: Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change. CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/assessment-primer-describing-your-community-collecting-data-analyzing-issues-and>

associated with increased levels of substance misuse among youth. Youth often report that the means they use to get substances are from family members, neighbors, and/or friends.

Source: Center for Health Policy, Indiana University (2018)⁷.

Perception of Harm

Perception of the risks associated with substance use is an important determinant of whether a individual engages in substance use. For example, youths who perceive high risk of harm are less likely to use drugs than youths who perceive low risk of harm. Thus, providing adolescents with credible, accurate, and age-appropriate information about the harm associated with substance use is a key component in prevention programming. Expanding upon research that shows the predictive nature of risk perceptions to subsequent substance use among adolescents, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) provides an opportunity to conduct a cross-sectional analysis of the changes over time in the prevalence of substance use and perceptions of risk. A perception of risk and/or harm is the belief about potential harm or the possibility of a loss. It is a subjective judgement that people make about the characteristics and severity of a risk.

Although cross-sectional analysis cannot confirm that increases in substance use are a direct result of decreases in perceptions of risk, this report examines how rates of substance use and perceived risk vary over time and in relation to each other. Understanding the relationship between risk perception and substance use during adolescence may help to better target health promotion messages and increase the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs.

Source: Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (2013)⁸.

Parents and Family

Children with parents who use substances are at an increased risk for child maltreatment. Drugs and alcohol inhibit a parent's ability to function in a parental role and may lessen impulse control, allowing parents to behave abusively. Children in these homes may suffer from a variety of physical, mental, and emotional health problems at a greater rate than do children in the general population. These children are also subject to higher rates of emotional, physical, and sexual violence; housing instability; poverty; and physical health

⁷ Indiana University. (2022). Community Conditions Favorable for Substance Use. Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://fsp.h.iupui.edu/doc/news-events/Community-Conditions-Favorable-for-Substance-Use.pdf>

⁸ Lipari RN. Trends in Adolescent Substance Use and Perception of Risk from Substance Use. 2013 Jan 3. In: The CBHSQ Report. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); 2013-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK385059/>

issues. The following resources describe the characteristics of people who engage in child maltreatment where substance use is involved.

Parents and family can have an enormous effect on substance use. This can be from the perspective of positive parenting to supporting someone while they are in treatment or trying to recover. Parents and family can be a positive part of the process from prevention to recovery. Research has found that greater parental disapproval toward prescription drug misuse have a protective effect on prescription drug misuse outcomes and that stronger bonds with parents were associated with lower levels of prescription drug misuse. In contrast, favorable parental attitudes toward substance use have been associated with higher levels of prescription opioid misuse.

Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services (2022)⁹

Parental attitudes and behavior toward drugs, crime and violence influence the attitudes and behavior of their children. Parental approval of young people's moderate drinking, even under parental supervision, increases the risk of the young person using alcohol and marijuana.

Source: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2021)¹⁰.

Access and Availability

It has been well established that parents and the home environment are critical in understanding patterns of substance use among adolescents and young adults. There is research on parenting factors, which shows that parenting behaviors and practices are of great significance in explaining alcohol and drug use among adolescents. The specific aspects of parenting behaviors and practices that relate to child outcomes are the adolescent's perception of parental warmth and acceptance, parental rules for behavior, autonomy-granting and parental monitoring. Research has found that this kind of parenting, characterized by responsiveness to children's needs, but also demanding that children control their behavior (authoritative parenting), is related to greater psychosocial

⁹ Parental Substance Abuse. Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/people/substance/>.

¹⁰ Assessment Primer: Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change. CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/assessment-primer-describing-your-community-collecting-data-analyzing-issues-and>

Broman CL. The Availability of Substances in Adolescence: Influences in Emerging Adulthood. J Child Adolescent Subst Abuse. 2016;25(5):487-495. doi: 10.1080/1067828X.2015.1103346. Epub 2016 May 26. PMID: 29200806; PMCID: PMC5710832.

competence, school success, and less involvement in problem behaviors, in general, and less drug use, in particular.

Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services (2016).

Retail Availability

The neighborhood-level density of alcohol outlets has been associated with a variety of negative health outcomes for communities including adolescent substance use, intimate partner violence, and child maltreatment. With regard to child maltreatment, previous research has consistently shown higher levels of alcohol outlet density as associated with higher rates of child abuse and. These findings suggested broad, aggregate trends across all types of alcohol outlets and types of child maltreatment. outlets refer to drinking venues where the consumption of alcohol occurs on site (e.g., bars or restaurants) and off-premises outlets refer to venues where consumption must occur away from the establishment (e.g., liquor stores). Retail availability is having the ability to purchase substances at retail establishments. In most cases this will be through employees that are work at these locations.

Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services (2014)¹¹

The more available drugs are in a community and the more youth have access to these drugs, the higher the risk that young people will use drugs in the community. Retail availability refers to how available alcohol or other drugs are from legal sources in the community. Social access refers to alcohol obtained through sources such as parents and friends, at underage parties, and at home.

Source: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2021)¹².

Economic Availability and Resources

Economic availability is a measure of the likely success of a particular action or set of actions. In this case, as it pertains to substance use/misuse, how the economy affects substance use disorder. This has to do with user's economic state and the basic rule of supply and demand.

¹¹ Morton, C., Simmel, C., & Peterson, N. (2014). Neighborhood alcohol outlet density and rates of child abuse and neglect: Moderating effects of access to substance abuse services. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 38(5), 952-961. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.01.002

¹² Assessment Primer: Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change. CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/assessment-primer-describing-your-community-collecting-data-analyzing-issues-and>

The profound effect that substance use disorders have on people struggling with addictions is borne out by the evidence. In a 2019 study from *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* it was found that "across 17 states in 2002–2014, opioid overdoses were concentrated in more economically disadvantaged zip codes, indicated by higher rates of poverty and unemployment as well as lower education and median household income." Other studies have found poverty to be a risk factor for opioid overdoses, unemployment to be a risk factor for fatal heroin overdoses, and a low education level to be a risk factor for prescription overdose, and for overdose mortality. Homelessness has been shown to be associated with overdoses as well, particularly among veterans. Terrible outcomes are associated with incarceration, particularly the period just after release from incarceration, when deaths from overdoses skyrocket.

Source: Harvard University (2021)¹³.

Law and Policy

Research has shown that policies focused on reducing alcohol misuse for the general population can effectively reduce alcohol consumption among adults as well as youth, and they can reduce alcohol-related problems including alcohol-impaired driving

Policies to prevent prescription drug misuse and related harms have only begun to receive research attention. However, some studies have begun to examine the impact of prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) on misuse of prescription medications. These state-initiated policies are designed to curb the rate of inappropriate prescribing of opioid pain relievers through various methods. Data from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) *Automation of Reports and Consolidated Orders System* (ARCOS) showed little impact of these monitoring systems, perhaps because of the variability of the policies controlling different state systems. The ARCOS is an automated, comprehensive drug reporting system which monitors the movement of controlled substances from where they are manufactured through distribution at the retail level, such as hospitals, pharmacies, and practitioners. Some studies associate state PDMPs with lower rates of prescription drug misuse and altered prescribing practices, although evidence is mixed and inconclusive.

One reason for inconsistent findings may be low and variable prescriber utilization of PDMPs. Because mandates are relatively new, their efficacy in increasing PDMP utilization has not been formally studied. However, preliminary data suggest that in some states mandates have contributed to a rapid increase in provider enrollment and utilization of PDMPs and subsequent decreases in prescribing of controlled substances and the number of patients

¹³ Poverty, homelessness, and social stigma make addiction more deadly - Harvard Health. (2021). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/poverty-homelessness-and-social-stigma-make-addiction-more-deadly-202109282602>

who visit multiple providers seeking the same or similar drugs. Data from Kentucky, Tennessee, New York and Ohio—early adopters of comprehensive PDMP use mandates—indicate substantial increases in queries, reductions in opioid prescribing, and declines in multiple provider episodes (doctor shopping) following implementation.

In one of the most rigorous studies to date, Florida's simultaneous institution of a prescription drug monitoring system and “pill mill” control policies was compared to Georgia, a state without either policy. This study demonstrated “modest reductions in total opioid volume, mean morphine milligram equivalent per transaction, and total number of opioid prescriptions dispensed, but no effect on duration of treatment. These reductions were generally limited to patients and prescribers with the highest baseline opioid use and prescribing.”

Source: United States Office of the Surgeon General (2016)¹⁴.

Enforcement refers to enforcing policies to decrease retail and social availability, as well as use and distribution of illegal drugs through threat of sanctions. This requires that appropriate laws are in place, the laws are enforced, and consequences are applied. Informal enforcement could come in the form of communities being unwilling to patronize stores that sell alcohol to minors.

Source: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2021)¹⁵.

Promotion of Use

Research has found that youth remember alcohol advertising and can be positively influenced by advertising. Increased exposure to alcohol ads is associated with increased consumption and with heavy or hazardous drinking. Alcohol advertisements that were rated by youth as more likeable also were endorsed with greater intention to purchase the brand and products promoted. In regard to price, evidence suggests that price increases and taxation (assuming increases pass through to retail price) have a significant effect in reducing demand for alcohol.

¹⁴ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); Office of the Surgeon General (US). Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health [Internet]. Washington (DC): US Department of Health and Human Services; 2016 Nov. CHAPTER 3, PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND POLICIES. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK424850/>

¹⁵ Assessment Primer: Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change. CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/assessment-primer-describing-your-community-collecting-data-analyzing-issues-and>

Source: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2021)¹⁶.

Frequency of Substance Use/Misuse

Research cautions against conflating all increased drug use directly with COVID-19. For example, shifts in drug availability may also be to blame for increased illicit opioid use deaths; if heroin isn't easy to access, someone might take fentanyl, which is much stronger. But experts agree based on research and clinical observation that pandemic-related strains, from economic stress and loneliness to general anxiety about the virus, are a major driver for the increase. People are more stressed and isolated, so they make unhealthy decisions, including drinking more and taking drugs.

As their stress increases, people may have fewer ways to manage it, and this probably contributes to the uptick in substance misuse. For example, resilience-promoting activities, like physical activity and social interactions, haven't been as safe to engage in or easy to access, which can lead some people to start using drugs or use them more often or in greater amounts. SUD Use/Misuse is about the current trends of cigarette smoking, vaping, and alcohol and drug use/misuse. This includes historical use data and trends.

Source: American Psychological Association (2021)¹⁷.

Enforcement and the Courts

Police administrators across the country are recognizing the need to connect individuals with whom they come into contact in the community to evidence-based treatment to better address the large social and economic burden of substance use disorders (SUD), a chronic and relapsing condition. This variable is based on how much law enforcement and the courts mitigate the damages and long-term effect on substance use disorder.

1. As gatekeepers of the criminal justice system, police personnel play a vital role in preventing and intervening in the cycle of offending and advancement through the criminal justice system.

¹⁶ Assessment Primer: Describing Your Community, Collecting Data, Analyzing the Issues and Establishing a Road Map for Change. CADCA. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.cadca.org/resources/assessment-primer-describing-your-community-collecting-data-analyzing-issues-and>

¹⁷ Substance use during the pandemic. American Psychological Association (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/03/substance-use-pandemic>

2. Police frequently encounter substance using individuals and their families in the community, and often have repeat contacts with individuals suffering from SUD.

Source: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (2022)¹⁸.

Schools represent valuable social institutions that play an essential role in the safe and healthy development of youths, including the prevention of substance use (e.g., tobacco, alcohol and marijuana). On the other hand, exposure and use of substances such as smoking, drinking and illicit drugs, continues to threaten healthy school environments as well as the safe development of youth. Therefore, the development of a holistic evidence-based substance use prevention strategy is a crucial step towards the support of children in schools. This strategy needs to be based on scientifically oriented programs embedded in a safe school ethos and environment. Law Enforcement Officers' (L.E.O.) roles in such strategies, while frequently used, are not guided by a clear set of scientific data supporting the effective role they might potentially play to ensure such a safe school environment, which in turn, prevent substance use as well as other negative social and health consequences in schools.

Source: International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (2021)¹⁹.

Despite increasing evidence that addiction is a treatable disease of the brain, most individuals do not receive treatment. Involvement in the criminal justice system often results from illegal drug-seeking behavior and participation in illegal activities that reflect, in part, disrupted behavior ensuing from brain changes triggered by repeated drug use. Treating drug-involved offenders provides a unique opportunity to decrease substance abuse and reduce associated criminal behavior. Emerging neuroscience has the potential to transform traditional sanction-oriented public safety approaches by providing new therapeutic strategies against addiction that could be used in the criminal justice system.

Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services (2010)²⁰.

¹⁸ Rethinking Law Enforcement's Role on Drugs. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from http://www.icjia.state.il.us/assets/articles/Police_drug_diversion_012517.pdf

¹⁹ El-Khatib, Z., Herrera, C., Campello, G., Mattfeld, E., & Maalouf, W. (2021). The Role of Law Enforcement Officers/Police in Drug Prevention within Educational Settings—Study Protocol for the Development of a Guiding Document Based on Experts' Opinions. *International Journal Of Environmental Research And Public Health*, 18(5), 2613. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18052613

²⁰ Chandler, R., Fletcher, B., & Volkow, N. (2009). Treating Drug Abuse and Addiction in the Criminal Justice System. *JAMA*, 301(2), 183. doi: 10.1001/jama.2008.976

Mediating Resources

Community coalitions have the potential to prevent substance use disorder (SUD) in communities. Coalitions can strengthen collaboration between public and private organizations in communities, address factors in the community that increase the risk of substance misuse, and support interventions that promote environmental strategies to address SUD in the community. Community coalition prevention models may focus on developing new policies related to SUD, changing social norms and beliefs in the community about SUD, and supporting schools and other organizations in addressing SUD.

Community coalitions can be an important strategy to address adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) — traumatizing events that occur before the age of 18. Multiple studies have shown that ACEs can be caused by growing up in a household with family members who have an SUD, and also contribute to the development of SUD in adolescents and adults.

Source: Rural Health Information Hub (2022)²¹.

A separation of substance use disorder treatment from the rest of health care has contributed to the lack of understanding of the medical nature of these conditions, lack of awareness among affected individuals that they have a significant health problem, and slow adoption of scientifically supported medical treatments by addiction treatment providers. Additionally, mainstream health care has been inadequately prepared to address the prevalent substance misuse-related problems of patients in many clinical settings. This has contributed to incorrect diagnoses, inappropriate treatment plans, poor adherence to treatment plans by patients, and high rates of emergency department and hospital admissions.

Source: United States Office of the Surgeon General (2016) .

The opioid epidemic affects employers in every industry throughout the country, but nonprofits face unique challenges. They're forced with increased intake volumes often without corresponding increases in budget and/or staffing. When resources become strained, nonprofit organizations simply cannot perform as well, and they often see an increase in risk factors not only their clients served, but also in their staff members and the health of the organization as a whole.

In particular, nonprofit sectors like the foster care system and drug treatment facilities have been impacted most significantly by the opioid epidemic. According to the National Council for Adoption, in 2016 over 90,000 children were removed from their homes due to parental

²¹ Community Coalition Prevention Models - RHInfo Substance Use Disorder Toolkit. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/substance-abuse/2/prevention/community-coalition>

drug abuse. And, according to information from the National Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment Services, compared with data from 2000-2010, from 2005-2015 there was an 11 percent increase for overall admissions intake that was related to opioid addiction.

Nonprofit organizations will continue to see increased risks as they face inadequate staffing, facilities or systems that impact their abilities to best provide for their clients. This, in turn, can have an adverse effect on the quality of their services and treatments, possibly resulting in delayed recovery times, relapse, under-supervised patients or children and an overworked staff. When staffing ratios are exceeded, the risks increase even further as nonprofits face missing key personnel, disruptions of supplies or materials, and the possibility of encountering potentially violent clients.

Source: AmTrust Financial 2022²².

²² Opioid Epidemic and Nonprofits | AmTrust Financial. (2022). Retrieved 6 July 2022, from <https://amtrustfinancial.com/blog/loss-control/opioid-epidemic-nonprofits>

All Stars Prevention Group Intervening Variable Scores for Surry County

Intervening Variables are factors that have been identified through research as having an influence on substance misuse and abuse. The Surry County All-Stars Leadership Team collectively scored the following Intervening Variables using a scale of 1 (No Impact) to 10 (Major Impact).

Chart 1: Scoring of Intervening Variables

Intervening Variable (Factors)	Min. Score	Max. Score	Mean (Avg)	Mode
Access and Availability	6	10	7.86	8
Perception of Risk/Harm	6	10	7.92	9
Parents and Family	6	9	7.90	8
Influence of Peers	7	10	8.30	8
Frequency of SUD Use/Misuse	4	8	6.50	7
Economic Availability and Resources	6	9	7.40	8
Retail Availability	3	9	7.50	9
Social Norms	7	10	8.83	9
Enforcement and the Courts	3	10	6.50	7
Promotion of Use	4	9	6.60	6
Social Availability	6	10	8.21	7
Mediating Resources	2	10	5.92	7
Law and Policy	4	9	6.64	7

Chart 2: Ranking of Intervening Variables Based on Mean (Avg)

Intervening Variable (Factors)	Rank (1 = Most Important)
Social Norms	1
Influence of Peers	2
Social Availability	3
Perception of Harm	4
Parents and Family	5
Access and Availability	6
Retail Availability	7
Economic Availability and Resources	8
Law and Policy	9
Promotion of Use	10
Frequency of SUD Use/Misuse	11
Enforcement and the Courts	12
Mediating Resources	13

Intervening Variable Comments - All-Stars Prevention Group

As part of the Intervening Variables data collection process, qualitative information was collected from each All-Stars Leadership Member. The respective comments can be found below sorted by the same topic framework as the quantitative scoring data.

Access and Availability

- Online Access, the availability and option to pay for drugs is different now, which makes it easier to obtain.
- The location of Surry County provides a route for drug trafficking due to Interstate 77.
- The rural aspect of the county makes it harder for law enforcement to enforce laws related to drugs.
- There is significant ability to obtain drugs in our community.
- Drugs are accessible via social media access.
- The county lacks sufficient law enforcement coverage.
- Being able to exchange money for drugs is made easier using social media and apps such as CashApp.
- Due to the rural nature of the county area, people know where to go for drugs.
- There is increasing availability of drugs in the county with a decrease of prices due to increased supply.
- Street level drug dealing has changed to be focused on social media and apps
- The lower cost of drugs results in greater community use.
- Rural communities have delayed law enforcement response times so there is no fear of being caught.
- Drugs of use and other substances are available 24/7 from convenience stores.
- Information circulates fast in our community; this information can include law enforcement actions or information about drug availability.

Perception of Risk and/ or Harm

- There are strong opinions on the topic of substance use that is driven by taboo and stigma.
- There is a growing level of social acceptance when discussing substance use.
- Depending on the substance, some feel that some drugs are more dangerous than others.
- Drug use feels more normalized in our community than before.
- Significant stigma and shame exist in Surry County.
- Addiction is seen as a moral failure
- It is normal for people who use drugs to be seen as failures.
- There is a lack of prevention and treatment opportunities, which increases the harm done in our community.

- Lack of education opportunities about substance use in the county allows a low perception of harm to develop.
- Social acceptance of drug use decreases perception of risk.
- Substance use is not discussed because of perceived shame, this lack of discussion impacts perception of risk. If we don't talk about it, it must be okay.
- Youth in our community are not taught the dangers of both alcohol and drugs, even in schools.
- Normalization of some things affects perception of harm such as CBD, alcohol, substance use.
- Generational stigma causes shame, which increases substance use, while prohibiting hope and healing.

Parents and Family

- Parents often do not talk about substance use due to shame and lack of knowledge; parents should be educated.
- Our society encourages parents to be self-absorbed in their own lives.
- Lack of effective parenting skills are more obvious in our community.
- The impact of trauma/abuse/neglect are driving factors of substance use in Surry County.
- Parents adopt and often reinforce the significance of and presence of shame and stigma.
- Genetics plays a part in the family cycle of addiction.
- Lack of education available to parents and families.
- A sense of normalcy has been disturbed due to increased substance use rates and COVID-19.
- Kids are afraid to confide in their parents or disappoint their grandparents.
- There is a lack of family accountability and a fear of Shaming the family name.
- Generational behavior and norms have changed from prior years.
- Parenting has changed over the generations.
- A degree of shame is common amongst families.
- Lack of parental involvement fuels risk and decisions of children.
- Genetic factors can increase risk.
- Environmental conditions influence family and can normalize use or alternatively prevent use.

Peers

- Peers have significant influence.
- Friends have a lot influence and can be either 100% positive or negative.
- Peers provide a sense of acceptance to youth.
- Peers provide Connect-ability to other peers and influencers.

- Positive peer pressure can promote accountability among youth.
- Friends can have more influence than family.
- Peers can provide a sense of safety.
- The community does not understand the impact of peers and the influence peers have related to the use of substances.
- Peer acceptance can often result in codependence.
- Most people are a collaboration of the people they spend the most time with.
- Peers have a high level of influence on their friends.
- We live in an instant satisfaction society and peers can encourage such ideas related to instant gratification.
- We all strive for acceptance from others, so we conform to what our peers do.
- Peers gravitate to when and where they are accepted.
- Our community Co-dependently cares for one another frequently.
- Positive peer influences of non-users could have the same affect while driving acceptance.
- Peers overall fuel substance use through pressure and acceptance, as opposed to discouraging use.

SUD Use/Misuse

- Some people can use substances once and walk away, others are overwhelmed. There are increasing numbers of individuals who cannot control their use because the types of drugs available are more addictive.
- Lack of family increases the risk of substance use.
- Increased potency of drugs and plentiful supply has changed what once was low risk recreational use into a high risk pathway for full blown addiction.
- Many don't think about it, it's just what you do. Drugs are accepted.
- Loss of control of lives and personal situations are part of the addictive process.
- There are some that use sparingly and others that use constantly; however, I don't think it plays too much of a role in determining if people become addicted or not.
- People's lives eventually revolve around use – and it consumes their daily activities.
- Substance use in the past was occasional for many, now it's more consistent; maybe because drugs are stronger.
- Substance use fuels perpetuation of use and disregard of risk.

Economic Availability

- Society is constantly looking for cheaper and more effective drugs.
- Supporting one's drug habit often requires stealing and selling goods in the local community.
- Many citizens suffering from addiction spend all their resources on drugs.
- Extra COVID stimulus checks could have enabled substance use in recent years.
- Drugs are cheaper and more affordable in some ways today.
- Substance users often are forced to create their own income by buying, selling, trading drugs (to support their own habit).
- In recent years, stimulus checks have played a large role in the availability of substances to individuals.
- Food stamp trading still occurs in the community.

Retail Availability

- The availability of alcohol in our community is a factor that impacts risk and substances in general.
- The selling of alcohol is growing more and more common and more accepted in our county.
- Social media influences the marketing and availability of all substances.
- COVID increased availability of all substances and the negative impacts of substances.
- Delivery services related to alcohol changed the landscape during COVID and increased availability.
- Not checking ID's impacts, the availability of alcohol in our community.
- Local Vape Shops encourage risk-taking behavior and are often sources of product for youth.
- Individuals can order off the Internet with no checking of IDs or other types of age verification.
- If you build it, they will come, when we increase retail availability of alcohol and other substances, the population is there to purchase.
- I did not know that illegal substances were so readily available in the retail environment.
- The influence of vaping, CBD and Dabs are impacting our local schools hard.
- Numerous studies indicate that prevalence of substances (such as alcohol or Marijuana) in retail stores normalizes substance use.

Social Norms

- Drug use is glamorized.
- Everyone has it or knows who does, news spreads fast, especially via social media and text.

- Drug use is normalized on social media, TV, movies and in music.
- How-to videos exist online showing new users how to participate in drug use.
- Social media, and the arts, in general reflect and also impact the idea of what is “normal”. Thus, glamorized substance use becomes normal amongst youth in music and art.
- Facebook Marketplace is an example of a community that can support substance use through the buying and selling of goods and stolen property.
- Access in schools – kids know who to get what from.
- Presence of Drugs in media – Glamorizes and normalizes a “good party”.
- Phone apps – Glamorize perception.
- Youth have a broader perspective of influence. Social media, peers, school, the community.
- Substances are easily available to youths, as information about who has what substances or connections is prevalent in school aged circles.
- Social Norms – “normal” perception among peers / acquaintances. What is considered normal. Too often drug use is the “normal”.

Enforcement and Courts

- Limited staff exist to address the problems and issues that the courts are asked to manage.
- The lack of a drug court in the county limits options for court involved substance users.
- Too often those in court are only given a slap on the wrist.
- Court and law enforcement suffer from a lack of funding
- There is a lack of trust in the court system and law enforcement in some parts of our community.
- A lack of education exists in the public related to what the courts and law enforcement can and cannot do to decrease substance use in our community.
- Law enforcement can be too quick to arrest, and have little focus on rehabilitation.
- The lack of representation of minorities in law enforcement has a direct effect on enforcement policies.
- Law enforcement and the courts can have a negative and positive impact – sometimes it is hard to tell the difference.
- Poor relationships between law enforcement and substance users are more common than not.
- We need to open up to what the needs are. Law enforcement and the Courts are a closed system and must consider community feedback.
- Need more program options that support intervention and rehabilitation.
- The courts and law enforcement focus on dealers which can be replaced, and not the users. They are not helping the issues found in the county.
- There is no accountability for law enforcement and the courts in Surry County.

- What is the job of the court system? Everyone seems to have a different opinion.
- There is an obvious lack of accountability in courts at all levels.
- Lack of officers exist in policing. Departments are short staffed and have trouble keeping up with demand.
- Some ethnicities still “fear” the police and rightfully so.
- There is not enough court ordered treatment programs.
- Education is needed for court system staff about treatment options.
With limited staff and high caseloads, not enough care is placed in the substance abuse epidemic.
- Cultural and racial stigma are common themes found in our law enforcement and court systems.
- No drug court impacts our ability to respond as a county to users who find themselves in the court system.
- Minorities are heavily represented in the court system in Surry County and make up a large percentage of cases.
- Court ordered treatment, we don’t have enough and when it is ordered, often it is ordered incorrectly.
- Poor relationships between police and community are a driving force of division in the county.
- Race inequality is real and present here in Surry County.
- Blacks incarcerated 4 times the rate of whites in Surry County.
- The District Attorney’s Office and Department of Social Services fear court ordered treatment because clients can walk out of the treatment process?
Could this issue be one of the barriers?
- Intervention and treatment are certainly cheaper than incarceration.
- There is a lack of confidence in intervention and treatment services by many in law enforcement and the courts – for valid reasons.
- There is a lack of support, classes and professionals to evaluate people properly and identify their needs.

Promotion

- Festivals promote the consumption of alcohol and seem to be a growing activity in Surry County.
- Vape shops promote the use of introductory products and even illegal products to the community and our youth.
- Advocates of legalizing substances and growing legalization efforts impact how substances are viewed in our nation and community.
- Not doing anything only makes the situation worse.
- The generational impact of wineries and promotion as a tourist attraction impacts the availability of wine.
- Local companies continue to sponsor alcohol events in the county.

- Advocates for decriminalization are promoting drug use.
- Harm reduction efforts exist in the county and there is a false perception that it promotes or enables drug use.
- We must take a hard look at how we promote substance use in our county.
- Alcohol has been a big draw to Surry Community College related to viticulture. Our community has become a “wine-hub.”
- Our community frequently does nothing, turning a blind eye promotes substance use.
- Vape stores promote risky behavior throughout the county.
- Decriminalization of marijuana nationally actually promotes acceptance and use.
- There are views in the community that harm reduction promotes drug use. Harm reduction is misunderstood by many.
- We need anti-stigma statements and public communication that promotes recovery.
- Perception that harm reduction promotes use is wrong, and we must challenge the narrative.

Social Availability

- TikTok, Instagram, and social media posts advertise drug availability via social networks.
- Drugs are available with friends, families, and street dealers – people know where to get drugs.
- Although I know for some groups they know where to get it, I would have no clue where to buy or trade drugs.
- There is an “underworld” that is a cycle of individuals who sell substances to support their habit.
- It is easy to find and buy substances from peers considering how technically connected our society has become.
- Social media connections/ sales drive the transfer of drugs in Surry County.
- There are drug supply networks – not just one dealer anymore.
- Drug dealing is like a machine – going on drug runs from out of state, selling locally. It’s a way of life and culture.
- You can’t fix the demand. There will always be demand.
- Mobile patrol arrest notifications are clues to drug dealers and users about who to trust, who is selling and who is available to connect you to drugs. The arrest sheets matter.
- Crowd sourced information that results in things like quickly reporting cops in the area, and who is seen with who provides pre-warning opportunities.

Mediating Resources

- All-Stars is a community resource to help those in need.
- The new Recovery Out Loud Podcast helps to spread the word of Recovery.
- Birches Foundation is focused on Harm Reduction efforts in Surry County.
- The Department of Social Services is doing the best it can to help families impacted by substance use disorder.
- There is a growing sense of awareness over the impact of substances in our community, yet there is still much work to be done.
- Educational opportunities about this topic must be improved for all ages.
- Being able to create a sense of hope that recovery is possible, is the key to combating stigma. Hope is the greatest mediating resource.
- Accountability must be ensured at all layers of our community to make a difference. We are all accountable for a solution.
- There are natural consequences for actions and we have to make sure that when individuals and families are managing consequences, that we also provide resources that give hope.
- Acceptance is important. We must convey a spirit of acceptance and hope for community members and families impacted by addiction.
- Love
- The Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery has started a powerful conversation in some circles and is broadening the scope, educating, and building awareness.
- A primary goal must be to slow use, promote healthy behaviors, and focus on primary prevention.
- When we build an awareness of the dangers of substance use, we can begin to make a difference.
- Current programs and services can help our community build a better sense of hope. We need agencies to step up and be part of the solution.
- Churches can be a driving force to provide hope, but engagement is very difficult with many congregations.
- A public storefront of recovery is needed whose sole mission is to be the public leader for recovery and a place to go. A safe place that is not government, but representative of the community at large.

Law and Policy

- Legal issues and legal publications are detailed and difficult for the public to understand.
- Laws are confusing and often not consistent.
- Being able to drink alcohol outside of eating establishments is a new topic for the Mount Airy area.
- Not selling food but selling alcohol – what are the legal ramifications?

- Law and policy are frequently determined in order to support economic growth or to make money. The needs or thoughts of the citizens are often left out of the conversation.
- Things like drinking alcohol out in the open promotes substance use and normalizes it – while we locally create policy that allows such actions.

Planning Grid for Intervening Variables - All Stars Prevention Group

All-Stars Leadership Team members matched the thirteen (13) intervening variables known to impact substance use in our communities and their rankings to a readiness matrix to help identify actionable problems. The planning model utilizes a readiness scale to calculate the community's "Readiness Level" to address the identified intervening variables.

Readiness levels are divided into three categories:

1. High Likelihood to Change and High Priority for Planning
2. High Likelihood for Change and Low Priority for Planning
3. Difficult to Change and Low Priority for Planning

These categories are a modification of the "Risk Impact / Probability" tool, where the risk of taking an action is weighed against the probability of a successful outcome. The "Readiness Level" is a measure of how prepared the community is to take action to address a specific community need. Our community's readiness varies depending on its understanding of a problem, leader support, and resources available for solutions.

Intervening Variables (Impacts on Substance Use)	All Stars Placement
• Social Norms and Influence of Peers • Perception of Harm • Law and Policy • Frequency of SUD Use/Misuse • Mediating Resources • Enforcement and the Courts	High Likelihood to Change + High Priority for Planning
• Parents and Family • Retail Availability • Promotion of Use	High Likelihood to Change + Low Priority for Planning
• Social Availability • Access and Availability • Economic Availability and Resources	Difficult to Change + Low Priority for Planning

Section 6: Surry County: Recommended Prevention Interventions

Recommended Interventions

The following interventions or activities that are known to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors in communities like Surry County in relationship to substance misuse. The following interventions have been selected as the initial interventions to be provided by the All Stars Prevention Group based on the coalitions readiness, capacity and resources.

Suicide Prevention

CSAP Strategy Type	Information Dissemination
Desired Outcome	The Suicide Prevention Efforts goal is to advance suicide prevention through leadership, advocacy and a collective voice.
Description	Evidence informed practices are taken from the National Council for Suicide Prevention (NCSP) such as becoming aware of the warning signs, risk, and protective factors, and how to respond can alert gatekeepers (friends, family members, health professionals, etc.) of heightened suicide risk.
Source	The National Council for Suicide Prevention Web: https://www.thencsp.org/

Red Ribbon Week

CSAP Strategy Type	Information Dissemination
Desired Outcome	The desired outcome of Red Ribbon Week is to raise an awareness campaign that gets information to the general public about the dangers of drug use.
Description	Red Ribbon is the largest tobacco, alcohol, and other drug and violence prevention awareness campaign observed every year in October. It began as a tribute to fallen Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena in 1985.
Source	National Family Partnership Web: https://www.redribbon.org/

Education on Youth Vaping using “Talk. They Hear You.”

CSAP Strategy Type	Information Dissemination
Desired Outcome	The desired outcome of “Talk. They Hear You” is to help parents and caregivers start talking with their children early about the dangers of alcohol and other drug uses.
Description	This intervention is to inform school administrators, community leaders, educators, parents, policy makers, and others of the rising rates of vaping among youth and the need for targeted prevention programs and policies, as well as a comprehensive vaping reduction strategy. The “Talk. They Hear You.” Communication campaign is used to bring awareness to the community. Examples of strategies include distributing fact sheets at community events, parent’s night out presentations for schools, and promoting the “Talk. They Hear You.” mobile app.
Source	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Web: https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you

Faith Based Partnerships

CSAP Strategy Type	Community-Based Process
Desired Outcome	The desired outcome of developing faith-based partnerships is to form a model to build effective partnerships can be created between community programs, government and faith-based organizations.
Description	Create and coordinate a SAMHSA model program called Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI). This program develops a partnership between federal, state, and local programs and the faith-based community and community organizations. This model supports several programs in mental health prevention and addiction treatment at the national, state, and local levels.
Source	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Web: https://www.samhsa.gov/faith-based-initiatives

Collaborative Strategic Planning

CSAP Strategy	Community-Based Process
Desired Outcome	The desired outcome of collaborative strategic planning is to create a comprehensive guide to plan, implement, and evaluate prevention practices and programs.
Description	SAMHSA’s Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) will be used to do collaborative strategic planning. There are five steps and two guiding

	principles of the SPF that offer prevention planners a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the substance misuse and related behavioral health problems facing their states and communities.
Source	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Web: https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190620-samhsa-strategic-prevention-framework-guide.pdf

All-Stars Prevention Group Coalition Development

CSAP Strategy Type	Community Based Process
Desired Outcome	The desired outcome of the All-Stars Prevention Group Coalition is to become part of the solution through promoting awareness, enhancing understanding and changing perceptions of substance abuse in Surry County through public advocacy.
Description	A coalition is a voluntary, formal agreement and collaboration between groups or sectors of a community in which each group retains its identity but all agree to work together toward a common goal of building a safe, healthy, and drug-free community. Community coalitions are comprised of parents, teachers, law enforcement, businesses, religious leaders, health providers and other community activists who are mobilizing at the local level -- and nationally under the CADCA umbrella -- to make their communities safer, healthier and drug-free. Coalition building is a smart strategy that promotes coordination and collaboration and makes efficient use of limited community resources. By connecting multiple sectors of the community in a comprehensive approach, community coalitions are achieving real outcomes.
Source	Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Web: https://www.cadca.org/webform/start-new-coalition

Chemical Disposal Kits and Lock Your Meds Campaign

CSAP Strategy	Environmental
Desired Outcome	The desired outcome of the Chemical Disposal Kits and Lock your Meds Campaign is to increase awareness of prescription drug misuse, safe medication disposal and support our nation's families and communities in nurturing the full potential of healthy, drug free youth.
Description	Leftover prescription drugs fuel the U.S. opioid crisis at the local, state, and national levels. Public data, including new government studies and reports in medical literature, shows the U.S. continues to be flooded with opioid prescriptions, with enough prescriptions, with

	enough prescriptions written each year for half of all Americans to have one. Law enforcement and government agencies can help prevent misuse and abuse of opioids and other leftover prescription drugs by adding medication disposal to their drug disposal and substance abuse prevention efforts. Chemical drug disposal has a proven community impact and complements other disposal methods to increase safe disposal behavior. Lock Your Meds is a national multi-media campaign designed to reduce prescription drug abuse by making adults aware that they are the “unwitting suppliers” of prescription medications being used in unintended ways, especially by young people. Produced by National Family Partnership (NFP), the campaign includes a wide array of high-quality advertisements, posters, educational materials, publicity opportunities, interactive games and slide show presentations, and this website, where visitors can learn more and ask questions.
Source	Lock Your Meds North Carolina Web: https://www.lockyourmeds.org/nc/

Stop Overdose Focused Communication Campaign

CSAP Strategy	Information Dissemination
Desired Outcome	The desired outcome of the Stop Overdose Focused Communications Campaign is to raise awareness about a social issue and the long-term benefits of a community to adopt alternative approaches.
Description	Creating a communications plan that aligns community needs and goals can help gain buy-in and support the multiple stakeholder audience. Recommended topics that will be specifically targeted include: 1. <u>Facts on Fentanyl</u> - There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Both are considered synthetic opioids. Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain, especially after surgery and for advanced-stage cancer. 2. <u>Polysubstance Use Facts</u> - The use of more than one drug, also known as polysubstance use, is common. This includes when two or more are taken together or within a short time period, either intentionally or unintentionally 3. <u>Lifesaving Naloxone</u> - Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids, including heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid medications. Often given as a nasal spray, naloxone is safe and easy to use.

	4. <u>Stigma Reduction</u> - Addiction is a disease, not a character flaw. People suffering from substance use disorders have trouble controlling their drug use even though they know drugs are harmful. Overcoming a substance use disorder is not as simple as resisting the temptation to take drugs through willpower alone. Recovery may involve medication to help with cravings and withdrawal as well as different forms of therapy. It may even require checking into a rehabilitation facility. Recovery can be challenging, but it is possible.
Source	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web: https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/index.html

Intervening Variables – Interventions Outcome Matrix

A primary goal of prevention assessment and planning is to ensure alignment between intervening variables (or root causes) and planned activities. It is very important to pick community activities that a coalition believes will impact the problem present in a community and that the group has the capacity to implement and sustain over time.

The All Stars group ranked 13 intervening variables in the Surry County Community that is believed to impact substance misuse and abuse. The Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery provided technical assistance and suggested eight interventions for the community coalition to focus on for the next 18 months. Below is a chart provide a graphical representation of each intervening variable and if one of the recommended interventions by design will impact the community root cause.

Intervening Variables – Recommended Interventions Matrix

Intervening Variable	<i>Suicide Prevention</i>	<i>Red Ribbon Week</i>	<i>Youth Vaping - Talk They Hear You</i>	<i>Faith Based Partnerships</i>	<i>Collaborative Strategic Planning</i>	<i>All Stars Coalition Development</i>	<i>Chemical Medication and Lock Your Meds Campaign</i>	<i>Stop Overdose Communication Campaign</i>
Social/Community Norms								
Influence of Peers								
Social Availability								
Perception of Harm								
Parents and Family								
Access and Availability								
Retail Availability								
Economic Availability and Resources								
Law and Policy								
Promotion of Use								
Frequency of Substance Use Disorder and Use								
Enforcement and the Courts								

Presence of Mediating Resources								
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Section 7: The Basics of Effective Prevention Programming

Elements of Effective Prevention Programs²³

There is a multitude of effective substance abuse prevention interventions that may have different areas of focus and can be implemented in a variety of settings. Interventions can involve the family, school, and community and may provide substance abuse prevention for an individual or a population of youth by focusing on environmental and community factors and policies, developmental factors, or skill development

Core Components of Evidence-based Prevention Programs

Structure, content, and delivery are the core elements of effective research-based programs that NIDA suggests can help to address the key principles, and should be considered when determining what kind of prevention program is best for individuals and your community.

Structure refers to the following elements of a prevention program:

- *Program type.* School- and family-based programs are two program types that have been *shown to be effective in preventing drug abuse, with media and computer technology* programs beginning to demonstrate effectiveness as well.
- *Audience.* Programs are usually designed for a particular audience (e.g., girls at risk, Latino youth) to more effectively meet its needs.
- *Setting.* Programs are traditionally designed to reach an audience in its primary setting (e.g., a school-based program held in a school); however, it is becoming more common for programs not to be held in their primary setting (e.g., a family-based program held at a school, or a school-based program implemented in a youth organization, such as a Boys and Girls Club). Programs that focus on multiple components or program types often reach their intended populations through a variety of settings. Combining two or more effective programs has proven to be more effective than conducting a single program.

The specific **content** of prevention programs varies but is designed to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors. The elements of a program's content should include the following:

- *Information.* Information can include facts about drug laws and policies, and drugs and their effects. Although drug information is important, it has not been found to be an effective intervention by itself; that is, without additional prevention components.

²³ "Substance Abuse Prevention." Substance Abuse Prevention at Youth.gov, United States Government, <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/evidence-based-programs-youth-substance-abuse-prevention-and-treatment>.

- *Skills development.* Training to develop skills helps to build and improve behaviors (e.g., communication within the family, social and emotional development, academic and social competence, and dealing with peer pressure).
- *Strategies.* Some prevention programs are targeted at structural change (e.g., enforcing existing laws, such as those on alcohol or tobacco sales to minors, establishing tolerance policies, enforcing school rules or promoting norm changes, and establishing curfews).
- *Services.* Examples of services a program provides might include school, peer, or family counseling; drug-free zones; and health care.

The **delivery** of a prevention program includes the following elements:

- *Program selection or adaptation.* Communities must match effective research-based programs to their community needs in order to ensure the right fit. Adaptation involves changing a program to fit the needs of a specific population in various settings. The program's core elements are maintained to ensure fidelity to the model, while changes address the community's specific needs.
- *Implementation.* Implementing a program refers to how it is delivered, including the number of sessions, methods used, and program follow-up. Proper implementation is key to program effectiveness.

Caring Adults

Prevention programs have proven to be effective, but families and influential adults continue to play the most important role in determining how youth handle the lure of alcohol, cigarettes, misuse of prescription drugs, and illegal drugs. More recent studies have shown that parents and guardians (and adults influential in a youth's life) who speak to their children about the issues and have dinner with them on a regular basis, have children with a lower rate of use and abuse. Prevention programs can help to support family/mentoring relationships by providing parenting/mentoring skills and communication strategies.

Early Intervention

Intervening early—before high school—is critical. The data suggest that patterns of substance abuse become worse in the high school years. Individuals who begin using alcohol or tobacco when they are very young are more likely to abuse them later in life, when it becomes much more difficult to quit.

Section 8: Seven Strategies to affect Community Change

Seven methods that can bring about community change have been adopted as a useful framework by CADCA's Institute²⁴. Each of these strategies represents a key element to build and maintain a healthy community. In the planning process, utilize all seven strategies to be as comprehensive as possible to achieve population-level change. When focusing on implementation of environmental strategies, consider the types of information, skill-building and support activities necessary to move your interventions forward. You will see that the strategies overlap and reinforce each other.

The first three strategies—provide information, enhance skills and provide support—assist in educating the public, raising awareness and helping individuals make healthy choices. Generally they affect small numbers of individuals and are too weak to impact the community at large. These strategies often are necessary if you are working in a community where denial of and limited knowledge about the current problem is prevalent. But, they can provide initial information necessary to bring a community together around an issue.

Since the first three of the seven strategies focus on impacting individuals, they have obvious limitations and probably will not, by themselves, achieve measurable change in substance abuse rates in your community. However, the last four strategies are environmental in nature and when utilized in a multi-strategy plan can form the basis of a comprehensive approach along with the first three.

Seven strategies to affect community change

1. Provide information – Educational presentations, workshops or seminars, and data or media presentations (e.g., public service announcements, brochures, billboard campaigns, community meetings, town halls, forums, web-based communication).
2. Enhance skills – Workshops, seminars or activities designed to increase the skills of participants, members, and staff (e.g., training, technical assistance, distance learning, strategic planning retreats, parenting classes, model programs in schools).
3. Provide support – Creating opportunities to support people to participate in activities that reduce risk or enhance protection (e.g., providing alternative activities, mentoring, referrals for services, support groups, youth clubs, parenting groups, Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous).
4. Enhance access/reduce barriers** - Improving systems and processes to increases the ease, ability, and opportunity to utilize systems and services (e.g., access to treatment, childcare, transportation, housing, education, special needs, cultural and language sensitivity).

²⁴ Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2021).

5. Change consequences (Incentives/disincentives) – Increasing or decreasing the probability of a specific behavior that reduces risk or enhances protection by altering the consequences for performing that behavior (e.g., Increasing public recognition for deserved behavior, individual and business rewards, taxes, citations, fines, revocations/loss of privileges).
6. Change Physical Design – Changing the physical design or structure of the environment to reduce risks or enhance protection (e.g., parks, landscapes, signage, lighting, outlet density).
7. Modify/Change Policies – Formal change in written procedures, by laws, proclamations, rules, or laws with written documentation and/or voting procedures (e.g., workplace initiatives, law enforcement procedures and practices, public policy actions, systems change within government, communities, and organizations).

****Note:** This strategy also can be utilized when it is turned around to reducing access/enhancing barriers. When community coalitions establish barriers to underage drinking or other illegal drug use, they decrease its accessibility. Prevention science tells us that when more resources (money, time, etc.) are required to obtain illegal substances, use declines. When many states began to mandate the placement of pseudoephedrine-based products behind the pharmacy counter, communities experienced a significant decrease in local clandestine methamphetamine labs. Barriers were put into place that led to a decrease in the accessibility of the precursor materials for meth production.

The list of strategies were distilled by the University of Kansas Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development – a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre. Research cited in selection of the strategies is documented in the resources and research section of the CADCA website, www.cadca.org. The institute uses this list by permission of the university.

Section 9: Next Steps

The Surry County All Stars Coalition is quickly reaching the Implementation and Action Plan development stage that will impact implementation of recommended interventions for the coming 18-month period. An implementation and action planning describes in detail exactly how strategies will be implemented to accomplish the objectives developed earlier in this process. Plan refers to: a) specific (community and systems) changes to be sought, and b) the specific action steps necessary to bring about changes in all of the relevant sectors, or parts, of the community.

The key aspects of the intervention or (community and systems) changes to be sought are outlined in the action plan. For example, in a program whose mission is to increase youth interest in politics, one of the strategies might be to teach students about the electoral system. Some of the action steps, then, might be to develop age-appropriate materials for students, to hold mock elections for candidates in local schools, and to include some teaching time in the curriculum.

The implementation planning process is developed for each component of the intervention or (community and systems) changes to be sought.

These include:

- Action step(s): What will happen
- Person(s) responsible: Who will do what
- Date to be completed: Timing of each action step
- Resources required: Resources and support (both what is needed and what's available)
- Barriers or resistance, and a plan to overcome them!
- Collaborators: Who else should know about this action

In addition to the above informational items, effective implementation efforts focus on delivering evidenced-based and evidence informed programs and practices as intended. Coalitions must balance fidelity and adaptation and establish community supports critical to achieve successful implementation. Such activities focus on the following:

- Delivery of programs and practices
- Balance fidelity with planned adaptations
- Retain core components
- Establish implementation supports and monitor progress

Successful implementation of any program requires community support and commitment. These implementation supports include:

- Integrating efforts with programs that have a favorable community presence and history
- Key leadership and administrative support must be present

- Selected providers who implement the service must be based on prior track records and professional qualifications
- Delivery of providing training and technical assistance is a must to ensure high quality implementation
- Action plans must be clear and achievable
- All stages of program implementation should be monitored to ensure quality assurance and evaluation practices are implemented

Appendix

The All-Stars Prevention Group contains members in the following Community Sectors including:

- Youth
- Parents
- Business
- School Systems
- Media
- Youth-Serving Organizations
- Law Enforcement
- Religious or Fraternal Organizations
- Civic or Volunteer Groups
- Healthcare Professionals
- State or Local Agencies
- Prevention Agencies
- Hispanic Community
- LGBTQ Community
- People in Recovery
- Transitional Housing
- Mental Health Treatment
- Substance Use Treatment
- County Government Officials

