



PREVENTION WITH PURPOSE:

A Resource for Faculty Members

As a faculty member, you play a pivotal role in the lives of your students. As their trusted educator, advisor, and mentor, you help them develop the skills and competencies needed to achieve academic success and continue to live productive lives.

Unfortunately, your hard work is jeopardized when students engage in drug misuse.

Because faculty members interact regularly and directly with students, you are uniquely positioned to recognize students in distress from drug misuse and to intervene when they need it most. Beyond supporting students when they are in distress, there are important steps you can take before students develop problems. Effective, evidence-based prevention efforts result in fewer students experiencing drug-related problems and an improved learning environment in the classroom. These efforts are most successful when all members of the campus community, including faculty members, are actively involved.

Campus Drug Misuse: The Scope of the Problem



Marijuana use by college students is associated with lower grade point averages, reduced graduation rates, difficulty in concentrating, class absenteeism, and putting oneself in physical danger, among other consequences.³

Drug misuse is a significant challenge for all institutions of higher education. It not only affects students who use drugs—hampering their academic performance, retention, graduation rates, and mental health—but also affects the well-being of the entire campus community. Research suggests the effects of student drug misuse can be severe. For example, cannabis use by young adults has been associated with increased risks of thoughts of suicide, suicide plans, and suicide attempts.¹

It is important for faculty members to know that some students, including student-athletes, fraternity and sorority members, students identifying as LGBTQIA+, and students with certain mental health conditions, may be at higher risk of misusing drugs than their peers due to the unique personal, social, emotional, and societal stressors they face.

Prevention with Purpose: Key Elements of Effective Prevention

Students arrive on campus with a set of experiences that can both increase their risk of misusing drugs and protect them from doing so. But, prevention professionals and partners, including faculty members, can play a key role in fostering a campus environment that reduces the risk of drug misuse and promotes healthy behavior for all members of the campus community using a simple, evidence-based approach.

[*Prevention with Purpose: A Strategic Planning Guide for Preventing Drug Misuse Among College Students*](#) is organized around one such approach: the [*Strategic Prevention Framework*](#).

The SPF presents a collaborative, data-driven planning process for planning, implementing, and evaluating culturally relevant and sustainable prevention efforts based on a clear understanding of student and campus needs. Comprehensive planning processes, such as the SPF, have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing drug misuse and creating positive outcomes that lead to student success.



Your involvement as a faculty member is essential!

What You Can Do

There are many ways that faculty members can contribute to drug misuse prevention efforts and promote the health and safety of the campus community.

- » **Connect with campus prevention efforts.** Find out who is leading these efforts and what they involve. Then, consider participating in ways that align with your areas of interest. Do you have a discipline-specific lens, skill, or communication technique to offer? For example, can you bring your research expertise to support data collection and analysis, or a social science lens to understand the problems identified? Consider joining a group or coalition on campus, if one exists, that addresses student drug misuse and/or promotes well-being.
- » **Know where to go for help or consultation.** When it comes to supporting students in distress, you do not have to go it alone. Find out what on- or off-campus resources are available for students who are struggling. Your campus's student health center, counseling center, or student behavioral intervention team may be able to support the student directly or consult with you on how best to intervene. Some campuses may offer gatekeeper training programs, which assist faculty and staff members to identify warning signs of distress related to drug misuse and mental health issues and learn how to talk with students in distress and link them to support resources on campus.
- » **Correct misperceptions.** Many students believe their peers use drugs at higher rates than they actually do. These beliefs can actually increase their own risk of misusing drugs, as they create a norm that substance misuse is an accepted part of the campus culture. If your campus collects survey data about drug use, inquire about the numbers and help to educate students about the actual norms on campus based on credible data.
- » **Create a classroom that supports student well-being.** In addition to challenging the assumption that all students consume alcohol and use other drugs, integrate information about alcohol and other drug use and its prevention in your classroom activities and curricula. Encourage student engagement in prevention efforts. Include a statement about behavioral expectations and available drug misuse-related resources in your course syllabi. Make sure to choose abstinence- and recovery-friendly settings like coffee shops or outdoor spaces when gathering informally with students outside of the classroom.



Support all students and make sure to choose abstinence- and recovery-friendly settings like coffee shops or outdoor spaces when gathering informally with students outside of the classroom.

By integrating strategic prevention efforts into your classroom activities, you can play a significant role in promoting a campus culture that supports student success and well-being. For additional guidance on implementing an evidence-based prevention approach, like the SPF, we encourage you to review *Prevention with Purpose: A Strategic Planning Guide for Preventing Drug Misuse Among College Students*.²

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

- 1 Han, B., Compton, W.M., Einstein, E.B., & Volkow, N.D. (2021). Associations of suicidality trends with cannabis use as a function of sex and depression status. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(6): e2113025.
- 2 Suerken, C. K., Reboussin, B. A., Sutfin, E. L., Wagoner, K. G., Spangler, J., & Wolfson, M. (2014). Prevalence of marijuana use at college entry and risk factors for initiation during freshman year. *Addictive Behaviors*, 39(1), 302–307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2013.10.018>
- 3 Drug Enforcement Administration. (2020). Prevention with purpose: A strategic planning guide for preventing drug misuse among college students. Arlington, VA.

Copies of this Publication Are Available Online

Copies of this publication are available online at www.campusdrugprevention.gov, DEA's website for professionals working to prevent drug misuse among college students.

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**Drug Enforcement Administration
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