



## PREVENTION WITH PURPOSE:

### A Resource for Community and Technical Colleges

As a dedicated community and technical college leader, you work to graduate healthy students ready for the workforce. A crucial element to achieving this is preventing drug misuse among your students. The success of drug misuse prevention efforts for your institution depends on your active involvement and support.

#### **Effective Campus Drug Misuse Prevention Is Possible**

Research tells us that comprehensive, collaborative, data-driven drug misuse prevention initiatives create the positive outcomes we desire for our students. In [\*Prevention with Purpose: A Strategic Planning Guide for Preventing Drug Misuse Among College Students\*](#), college professionals can learn how to plan, implement, and evaluate effective prevention efforts. This brief resource is a supplement to the *Prevention with Purpose* strategic planning guide, tailored specifically to community and technical college leaders.

## Everyone Has a Role in Prevention

Prevention is often thought to be the job of the one person or department assigned the responsibility. But the success of prevention efforts hinges on many individuals joining together as a team to complete a collaborative planning, implementation, and evaluation process. You, together with other administrators, governing board representatives, and campus wellness specialists, share this responsibility.

“Community and technical college campuses thrive on collaborative partnerships, addressing issues from academic success to career placement for graduates. These same partnerships can be leveraged for drug misuse prevention. Colleagues that come together to help students succeed will also be willing to help students achieve well-being.” —Joan Masters, M.Ed., Project Director, Missouri Partners in Prevention

## Why Is Prevention Important?

The negative effects of drug misuse on student achievement and workplace readiness are well documented. Students who misuse drugs are less likely to succeed academically, more likely to drop out, and more likely to experience a variety of mental health problems and other health issues. And research suggests that community college students' engagement in drug misuse, and the negative consequences they experience because of that misuse, are similar, if not equal, to those of students attending four-year residential colleges.<sup>1</sup> Through prevention, you can reduce drug misuse among your students.



Marijuana use by college students is associated with lower grade point averages, reduced graduation rates, difficulty concentrating, missing classes, and putting oneself in physical danger, among other consequences.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, marijuana use among college students is at the highest level since the 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

## Shaping the Environment

Environment plays an indisputable role in promoting health behaviors. Students at community and technical colleges arrive on campus with a range of experiences that both increase their risk of misusing drugs and protect them from doing so. Since many, if not all, of your students live off campus, you have a limited ability to directly influence their behaviors when they are not in school. However, you **can** play a role in shaping students' attitudes toward drug use by creating a campus environment that supports healthy decision-making. Many well-researched prevention strategies are effective at preventing drug misuse through shaping the environment.<sup>5</sup> Their success depends on your leadership and close involvement.

Consequences from alcohol use by college students include “suicide attempts, health problems, injuries, unsafe sexual behavior, and driving under the influence of alcohol, as well as vandalism, damage, and involvement with the police.”<sup>4</sup>



## A Systematic Planning Process

### The Strategic Prevention Framework

Prevention is most effective when implemented using multiple approaches in a variety of settings. We often refer to this as a comprehensive approach to prevention. To increase our effectiveness and impact on student health and wellness, we must move away from believing that we can find a single or a one-time drug misuse prevention program to solve all our drug-related problems, such as a speaker giving a talk on drug misuse during orientation week. Research has shown repeatedly that one-time programs are not effective at preventing drug misuse.<sup>6</sup> Instead, it is crucial that you engage in a data-driven, systematic planning process to create a comprehensive strategy for your college’s prevention efforts.



[Prevention with Purpose](#) spotlights the [Strategic Prevention Framework](#) as the “how to” for systematically measuring the scope of drug misuse issues; building relationships with key stakeholders; and planning, implementing, and evaluating drug misuse prevention efforts.

The SPF planning process is most effectively completed through a team-driven approach, an approach that translates well to community and technical college administrators and staff who often wear many “hats.” Every step of the SPF benefits from and relies on participation from a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.

The following sections highlight each step of the SPF, along with tips on how to implement them on your campus. For additional details, interactive worksheets, and stories from other professionals who have done similar work, see the [Prevention with Purpose](#) strategic planning guide.



Identify other two-year schools, local four-year campuses, or statewide higher education collaboratives in your area and ask them what they are doing to address drug misuse prevention. This can be a part of assessment—to learn from others and benchmark your work.”

—Joan Masters, M.Ed., Project Director, Missouri Partners in Prevention

## What Drug Misuse Problems Exist?

### SPF Step 1: Assessment

Because each community and technical college is unique, an important first step in preventing drug misuse is collecting data. A thorough needs assessment will generate the data you need to effectively plan, implement, and evaluate your comprehensive prevention effort. Specifically, it will help you understand the following:

- » The drug misuse problems and related behaviors students are experiencing, including what substance misuse problems exist on your campus, how often and where these problems are occurring, and who is experiencing more of these problems (e.g., younger students, older students, student-athletes).
- » Factors present on campus that make it more or less likely that your students will misuse drugs. Since you cannot change a substance misuse problem directly, you need to work through the underlying risk and protective factors that influence the problem.
- » Your college’s capacity for prevention—that is, the resources available to address the identified problems and the readiness of your college to address those needs. (This information will be used in SPF Step 2.)

**RISK FACTORS** (e.g., low impulse control, peer substance misuse) are associated with a higher likelihood of developing a problem.

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS** (e.g., academic achievement, parental bonding, and family cohesion) are associated with a lower likelihood of developing a problem.

(Refer to Tables 1 and 2 in the [Prevention with Purpose](#) strategic planning guide for more information on risk and protective factors.)

**Tip:** Reach out to your local, county, or regional drug misuse prevention programs or coalitions (e.g., drug misuse prevention coalition, statewide coalition of campuses, local health department). They may have already completed a community assessment that could provide useful data for you. Also, your college may have collected useful data for related projects, such as conduct data, public safety data, and your college’s biennial report required under the [Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act](#).



## Groups at Elevated Risk

Some students may be at higher risk for drug misuse. These include student-athletes, LGBTQIA+ students, students with certain mental health conditions, and those in recovery from a substance use disorder. Since every college is different, it is important to collect drug use data to understand patterns of use by these and other subpopulations at your school.

For details and tools on the assessment step of the SPF, refer to [Chapter 3 of the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide](#).

## Is My College Ready for Prevention?

### SPF Step 2: Building Capacity

Before planning and implementing prevention efforts, it is important to build the capacity of your college to carry out drug misuse prevention efforts. Through your capacity building work, you will identify the key stakeholders needed at the table to ensure your prevention efforts will be successful. This work will also show you how much work you will need to do to increase your campus's readiness for prevention.

- » Capacity is defined as the **resources** needed to plan, implement, and evaluate drug misuse prevention efforts (e.g., fiscal, personnel, and institutional resources).
- » Capacity also refers to **readiness**—the degree to which a community is willing and prepared to act on an issue. If your college does not have a high level of readiness for prevention (e.g., there is denial that drug misuse is a problem among your students), prevention efforts will likely be met with resistance and possibly even backlash.

**Tip:** Potential partners for your college's prevention team include colleagues from:

- » Your academic success center, student life, disability services, athletics department, public safety staff, conduct and care team, and veteran's services
- » Your behavioral health services center (or contracting organization)
- » Local prevention agencies





As a community and technical college leader, you can build capacity for prevention efforts in the following ways:

- » Engage diverse partners, such as students, faculty, local community leaders, and law enforcement, to share information and resources, raise awareness of drug misuse problems, and build support for prevention.
- » Identify the strengths of your faculty and staff and how they may be helpful to your prevention efforts.
- » Develop and strengthen a prevention team by identifying and filling the gaps of groups represented and by building prevention knowledge.
- » Raise awareness of drug misuse issues to help garner valuable resources and increase readiness for prevention.

For details and tools on the building capacity step of the SPF, refer to [Chapter 4 of the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide](#).

## So, What Is the Plan?

### SPF Step 3: Planning

This step of the SPF involves crafting a prevention plan that is tailored to your college's unique needs. Planning tasks include:

- » Prioritizing which [risk and protective factors](#) to address based on your assessment data to address your campus's identified priority drug misuse problem
- » Selecting one or more evidence-based drug misuse prevention strategies that meet your college's needs, such as those listed in the [College Alcohol Intervention Matrix](#)
- » Creating an action plan
- » Building a logic model to share with key stakeholders

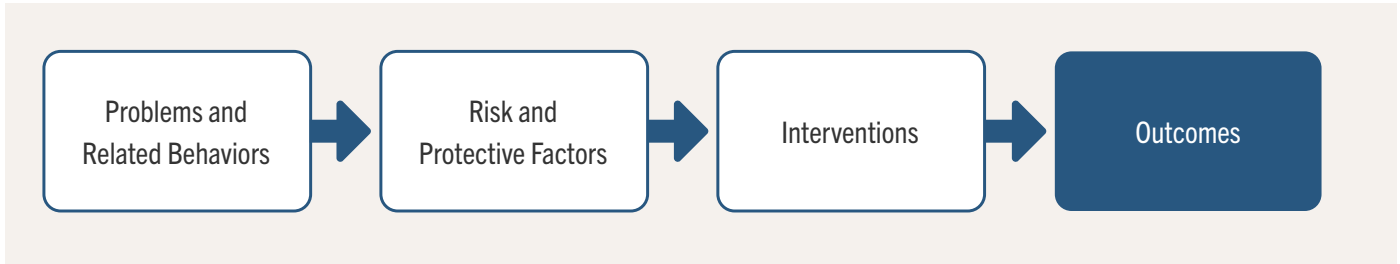
**Tip: Don't feel like you have to do it all!** If your prevention resources are limited, narrow your efforts to focus on one or two risk or protective factors. This will help you avoid spreading your efforts "too thin" to be effective.

**Tip:** More expensive prevention programs are not always better! Many low-cost, effective programs and strategies exist, such as the implementation of campus-wide policies restricting alcohol advertising at college activities and events.

“Consider the strengths your colleagues bring to the table. Do they excel at connecting with students, event planning, or marketing? Plan your coalition tasks around the strengths of your colleagues, not your professional agenda.”

—Joan Masters, M.Ed., Project Director, Missouri Partners in Prevention

A logic model is a visual depiction of how you plan to achieve your prevention goals:



For details and tools on the planning step of the SPF, refer to [Chapter 5 of the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide](#). For more information about evidence-based prevention strategies, download the [Guide to Online Registries for Substance Misuse Prevention Evidence-based Programs and Practices](#).

## Let's Do This!

### SPF Step 4: Implementation

It can be tempting to jump right in and begin implementing the programs you've so carefully selected. Resist the temptation! The success of comprehensive prevention efforts depends on careful implementation. So, take time to connect with key partners and establish support systems *before* beginning implementation. Doing so will increase the likelihood your selected approaches will be successful.

Key implementation tasks include:

- » Connecting with key implementation partners—that is, the people who will be delivering the intervention or making its delivery possible—to make sure they are on board with the implementation plan.
- » Balancing program implementation as designed while leaving room for adaptation to your campus community. This approach will increase the likelihood of consistent and positive outcomes with your prevention efforts.

**Tip:** Many prevention programs and strategies have fidelity checklists to help you make sure you are implementing them as intended.

For details and tools on the implementation step of the SPF, refer to [Chapter 6 of the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide](#).

## Were We Successful?

### SPF Step 5: Evaluation

Evaluating the programming you implement will provide you with information to improve effectiveness. It will also help you tailor your programming, if needed, to better fit the students with whom you work.

Key evaluation tasks include:

- » Engaging evaluation stakeholders—that is, the people who are part of your college and the surrounding community who care about or have something to gain or lose from your prevention programming
- » Developing an evaluation plan
- » Collecting data before, during, and after program implementation, as needed
- » Analyzing your data
- » Making sure evaluation findings are used by sharing the lessons learned with your stakeholders

**Tip:** Find a faculty member who might be willing to make your evaluation a class project. They may also have access to students interested in becoming paid research assistants, working under their supervision.

For details and tools on the evaluation step of the SPF, refer to [Chapter 7 of the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide](#).

## Cultural Competence and Sustainability

### Central Principles of the SPF

All five steps of the SPF are guided by two central principles: *cultural competence and sustainability*.

Cultural competence describes the ability of an individual or organization to interact effectively with members of diverse population groups. At a community or technical college, this means understanding that specific student groups within your college may have vastly different ways of thinking about and understanding a drug misuse issue. One way to work toward cultural competence is to practice cultural humility—that is, the active practice of dismantling the biases and beliefs that we, as individuals, bring to our work with students and student groups on our campuses. Practicing cultural humility also means taking a close look at the historical biases and belief systems that operate on our campuses and working to dismantle those systems as well.

Equally important is the concept of sustainability—how you will maintain successful prevention efforts over time. To enhance the sustainability of campus prevention efforts, think about sustainability from the beginning. Tap into the strong connections you have with the community, particularly regarding workforce development. Use these connections to build support for your prevention efforts. This will help you secure necessary resources and funding.

For more information about incorporating cultural competence and sustainability in the SPF planning process, refer to [Chapter 2 of the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide](#).



## Take Action!

Now is the time to take action to strengthen the health and well-being of your students. YOU are essential to the success of your college's drug misuse prevention efforts!

Beyond the actions listed throughout this document, here are some additional steps you can take to begin the crucial work of drug misuse prevention on your campus:

- » **Create a prevention-focused culture on campus.** Publicly acknowledge that drug misuse problems exist on campus and amplify prevention messages on campus. Then convey clear, unambiguous expectations and standards regarding drug misuse on campus whenever possible (e.g., welcome letter to students, convocation/welcoming speech, orientation, signs on campus). Others will follow your lead.
- » **Support the development of a prevention infrastructure.** Effective prevention requires collaboration among a wide range of key stakeholders and community-based partners. If your campus does not have a prevention team or coalition, consider working with others to start one. If your campus does have a team in place, be sure you know the staff coordinating it and learn about what they are doing and why it is important.
- » **Learn about prevention best practices.** Participate in professional development opportunities about what constitutes effective prevention and the role you can play (e.g., online courses, webinars, local prevention trainings, books, journal articles). Explore the [Campus Drug Prevention](#) website and review the [College Alcohol Intervention Matrix](#).



Without a diagnosis or prescription, the use of Ritalin as a study aid can lead to increased anxiety, decreased academic success, and increased likelihood of dependence on the drug.<sup>7</sup>

By completing the SPF steps outlined in this publication, you can create a data-driven, comprehensive strategic plan to prevent drug misuse among your students and help your students thrive. For additional guidance on the SPF, we encourage you to review [Prevention with Purpose: A Strategic Planning Guide for Preventing Drug Misuse Among College Students](#).

## Acknowledgements

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## Endnotes

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## Copies of this Publication Are Available Online

Copies of this publication are available online at [www.campusdrugprevention.gov](http://www.campusdrugprevention.gov), DEA's website for professionals working to prevent drug misuse among college students.

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