



## PREVENTION WITH PURPOSE:

### A Resource for Student Affairs Professionals

As student affairs professionals, you work every day to promote the health and well-being of your students. Preventing drug misuse is essential to creating campus environments in which students can thrive. However, the success of drug misuse prevention efforts on your campus depends on your active participation.

#### Effective Prevention Is Possible

Research tells us that comprehensive, collaborative, data-driven prevention initiatives are what is needed to effectively reduce and prevent drug misuse among college students. [\*Prevention with Purpose: A Strategic Planning Guide for Preventing Drug Misuse Among College Students\*](#) provides campus professionals with step-by-step guidance for planning, implementing, and evaluating effective prevention efforts. This brief resource is a supplement to the *Prevention with Purpose* strategic planning guide, tailored specifically to student affairs professionals.

#### Why Is Prevention Important?

Drug misuse affects academic success, retention, mental health, and other health and wellness issues. Do you want to be a champion for student health, wellness, safety, and success? Be a champion for drug misuse prevention!

## Shaping the Campus Environment

Environment plays an indisputable role in promoting health behaviors. All students arrive on campus with a range of experiences that both increase their risk of misusing drugs and protect them from doing so. You cannot change these past experiences. But you **can** help to create an environment that makes it easier for students to make healthy and safe choices.

The most important way you can do this is by supporting campus-based prevention efforts. In your student affairs role, you engage directly with students and other campus community members. You are on the front lines, interacting directly with students. This gives you a unique position to influence attitudes related to alcohol and other drug use and to provide education and support at teachable moments—when students may be most likely to listen.

There are many well-researched prevention strategies that we know can work for preventing drug misuse among college students. Many of these programs are driven by student affairs professionals. Their success depends on your leadership and close involvement.



We have come so far in how we understand these issues on campus... It's a truly exciting time for AOD [alcohol and other drug] prevention on campus!"

—Dolores Cimini, Ph.D., Director, Center for Behavioral Health Promotion and Applied Research, University at Albany, State University of New York

## Everyone Has a Role in Prevention

Who should be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating campus prevention efforts? The responsibility for prevention is shared across all roles in student affairs, as well as other roles on campus. Prevention is often thought of as the job of the one person or department assigned that duty. However, the success of prevention efforts hinges on many individuals and departments working together. As someone who works in student affairs, your involvement is essential!

Prevention efforts are most effective when multiple stakeholders join as a team to complete a collaborative planning and implementation process, as described below. You have valuable information to contribute and participating in this process will make your own prevention efforts more effective. If your campus has a prevention team or coalition, reach out to the chair to discuss how you might be able to work collaboratively on campus prevention efforts.

If your campus does not have a prevention team or coalition, you do not have to wait for one to be formed before partnering with others. One easy step is to reach out to other staff members who may be engaged in drug misuse prevention and ask to learn more about their efforts. How can your efforts reinforce one another? How might each of you be more effective in your efforts?

## 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, it is important to avoid relying on a one-time or a single drug misuse prevention program to solve substance-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>1</sup> Instead, it is crucial that you use a data-driven, systematic planning process to create a comprehensive, multi-component strategy for your campus.

The *Prevention with Purpose* strategic planning guide spotlights the Strategic Prevention Framework as the “how to” for your comprehensive efforts. It can help you to systematically measure the scope of drug misuse issues; build relationships with key stakeholders; and plan, implement, and evaluate a drug misuse prevention effort.



The SPF is a team-driven approach, which may come as a relief to many student affairs professionals who have been working on prevention in isolation. Every step of the SPF benefits from and relies on participation from a diverse cross-section of your campus population. Your knowledge and experience of student affairs, combined with the activities you do with students on campus, will be invaluable to your campus’s prevention efforts.

The following sections briefly describe each SPF step along with examples of how student affairs professionals can provide support. Refer to the *Prevention with Purpose* strategic planning guide for additional details, interactive worksheets, and stories from other campus professionals who have done this work.



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> Twenty-five percent of college students reported using marijuana at least once in the prior 30 days.<sup>3</sup>

## What Drug Misuse Problems Exist on My Campus?

### SPF Step 1: Assessment

Because each college campus is unique, defining the problem(s) on your campus is the first step in preventing drug misuse. An assessment provides an accurate picture of what is happening on your campus so you can effectively plan, implement, and evaluate your comprehensive prevention efforts.

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Burying the [alcohol and other drug] data or not collecting it at all doesn't help anybody. You need data to move forward.”

—Peggy Glider, Ph.D., Coordinator for Evaluation and Research, Campus Health Service, University of Arizona

The *Prevention with Purpose* strategic planning guide walks you through the four tasks to be completed for an assessment. Student affairs professionals can contribute to these tasks by:

- » Sharing data you have access to in your role. Combining data from multiple sources will help to identify priority drug misuse problem(s) and the risk and protective factors that will be most useful to address.
- » Identifying the combined assets and resources available across campus to support and strengthen your collective prevention efforts.
- » Helping conduct a readiness assessment to determine ways to strengthen your campus capacity to carry out prevention efforts.
- » Sharing the key findings of your campus drug misuse assessment with colleagues to build support for prevention and to identify opportunities to align efforts across campus.



For details and tools on the assessment step of the SPF, refer to Chapter 3 of the strategic planning guide.



### Groups on Campus at Elevated Risk

Some students you work with may be at higher risk for drug misuse, such as athletes, fraternity and sorority members, LGBTQIA+ students, and students with certain mental health conditions. Since every campus is different, it is important to collect substance use data to understand patterns of use by these and other populations on your campus.

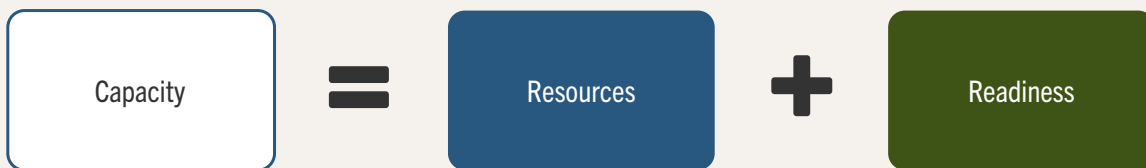
## Is My Campus Ready for Prevention?

### SPF Step 2: Building Capacity

Before planning and implementing prevention efforts, it is important to make sure your campus has the capacity needed to implement drug misuse prevention efforts. Capacity is defined as the resources (e.g., fiscal, human, and organizational) needed to plan, implement, and evaluate drug misuse prevention efforts. Capacity also refers to readiness—the degree to which a community is willing and prepared to act on an issue. If your campus community does not have a high level of readiness for prevention (e.g., there is denial that drug misuse is a problem on your campus), your efforts will likely be met with resistance and possibly even backlash.



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>4</sup>



“

We put a lot of our time and energy in getting the reluctant on board. Instead, find your allies and your partners and start with them and build momentum from there. Those people will help you get the other ones on board, and the reluctant won't matter anymore, because you're building and growing your program. Shift the energy toward your allies and your partners. That's where the momentum is.”

—Diane Fedorchak, Interim Director of the Center for Health Promotion,  
University of Massachusetts Amherst



## Student affairs professionals can support capacity-building efforts in the following ways:

- » **Engage diverse partners.** The involvement of student affairs professionals, campus law enforcement, faculty, senior administrators, students, community-based prevention specialists, and other key stakeholders is essential to successful prevention efforts. In your work, you connect regularly with many of these individuals. Thus, your assistance in mobilizing them is invaluable. Through these diverse partners, your campus's prevention efforts are much more likely to reach multiple populations in multiple settings with multiple strategies across your campus.
- » **Develop and strengthen a prevention team.** If you do not have a prevention team or coalition on campus, consider how you can start one. You might begin by meeting with a few colleagues whom you believe would have an interest in addressing substance misuse. If your campus already has a team in place, reach out to the chair to discuss how you can contribute to its efforts.
- » **Raise campus awareness.** Be a voice for prevention! Your access to students and key stakeholders provides you with unique opportunities to increase campus readiness for prevention. Use your connections to provide information about how drug misuse affects the campus community and the importance of prevention in creating a safe and healthy campus community.



**For details and tools on the capacity step of the SPF, refer to Chapter 4 of the strategic planning guide.**

## So, What Is the Plan?

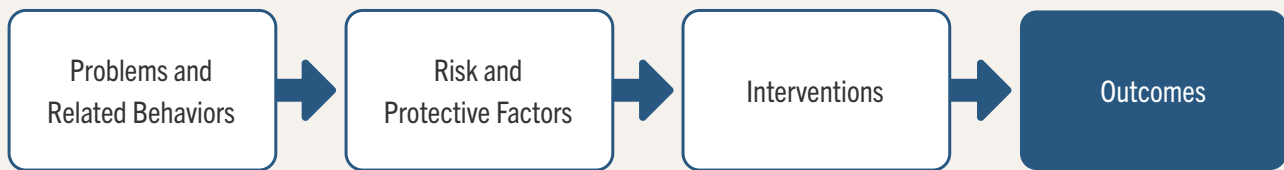
### SPF Step 3: Planning

This SPF step involves crafting a prevention plan that is tailored to your campus's unique needs. As student affairs professionals, you are in touch with various populations on campus. You have your pulse on campus culture. So, your input and leadership are critical in the selection of prevention programs or strategies.

#### Your involvement in the following activities will help create a successful plan:

- » **Use your knowledge** of the campus to help prioritize which risk and protective factors to address, using the data collected in SPF Step 1: Assessment.
- » **Reach out to colleagues** to find out if they are planning related prevention efforts. If yes, explore options for coordinating your efforts to increase effectiveness.
- » **Avoid planning one-time prevention programs.** Instead, work collaboratively to create a comprehensive prevention plan.
- » **Provide input** on which prevention programs and strategies will be a good fit for your campus culture and priority risk and protective factors.
- » **Help create a logic model** that describes how you will achieve expected results. Share it with colleagues to promote buy-in and understanding about planned prevention efforts.

### A logic model template:



## Let's Do This!

### SPF Step 4: Implementation

With a plan and logic model now in hand, it can be tempting to jump right in and implement. However, the success of comprehensive prevention efforts depends on careful implementation. Taking time to connect with key implementation partners and establish implementation support systems before beginning implementation will help to ensure that your selected approaches will be successful.

#### Your involvement will benefit implementation in the following ways:

- » Use your connections with students and colleagues to build investment in the prevention programs and strategies to be implemented.
- » If you are directly involved in implementing a prevention program or strategy, provide oversight to be certain it is implemented as designed (i.e., with fidelity). This will help to ensure that it achieves expected outcomes.



For details and tools on the planning step of the SPF, refer to Chapter 5 of the strategic planning guide.



For details and tools on the implementation step of the SPF, refer to Chapter 6 of the strategic planning guide.

## Were We Successful?

### SPF Step 5: Evaluation

Evaluating the programming you implement will provide the necessary information to improve effectiveness. It will also help you tailor your programming, if needed, to better fit the students with which you work. Examples of tasks that student affairs professionals can do to support evaluation include the following:

- » If you are directly involved in the implementation of a prevention program or strategy, be sure to create an evaluation plan before implementation so that any data needed for program monitoring is collected.

- » Invite colleagues who study and conduct their own evaluations to help you evaluate your prevention efforts.
- » Once the evaluation is complete, make sure evaluation findings are used by your program and by others as you move forward to plan future prevention efforts.



**For details and tools on the evaluation step of the SPF, refer to Chapter 7 of the strategic planning guide.**

## Cultural Competence and Sustainability

### Central Principles to the SPF

All of the SPF steps 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 college or university, this means understanding that specific student communities on your campus 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. To begin building cultural humility:

- » Examine your own beliefs related to drug use. How can you make sure that your beliefs do not influence how you view and interpret your students' drug use?
- » Discuss the concept of cultural humility with the students and colleagues you work with. Work with them to identify actions that can be taken to make sure prevention efforts are reflective of the cultures on your campus.

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>5</sup>

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It can be tempting to start right in with prevention programming, but it's important for us to really understand our stakeholders and target population groups, understand their cultures and their concerns, and be open and responsive to that.”

—Dolores Cimini, Ph.D., Director, Center for Behavioral Health Promotion and Applied Research, University at Albany



Equally important is the concept of sustainability, or the process of building an adaptive and effective system that achieves and maintains desired long-term results. Student affairs professionals can do the following to enhance sustainability:

- » Think about sustainability from the beginning. Tap existing connections and partnerships to build community support for prevention. This will help you secure the resources and funding necessary for your campus's prevention efforts.
- » Identify diverse resources. Look for people, partnerships, and materials to support prevention in unexpected places.
- » Invest in capacity. Find ways to teach others what you learn about strategic, data-driven prevention.
- » Integrate sustainability into the SPF. Work with others to integrate sustainability into the work you do on each step of the SPF.



**For more information about incorporating cultural competence and sustainability in the SPF planning process, refer to Chapter 2 of the strategic planning guide.**

## Take Action!

Now is the time to put your knowledge, experience, and unique perspective into action to strengthen the health and well-being of the students on your campus. YOU are essential to the success of your campus's drug misuse prevention efforts!

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

- » Be intentional about working collaboratively on drug misuse prevention efforts, including working with other stakeholders on assessment and planning.
- » Make sure the drug misuse prevention efforts you implement are evidence-informed and follow best practices.
- » Work closely with those inside and outside of student affairs to make sure prevention efforts are aligned with the overall campus strategic plan and are implemented as intended.
- » Advocate for prevention across campus and provide information and education to those who do not yet understand the work and their role in it.



**Be intentional and work collaboratively with those inside and outside of student affairs to ensure prevention efforts are evidence based and aligned with the overall campus prevention goals.**

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*.

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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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Office of Congressional and Public Affairs  
Community Outreach and Prevention Support Section**

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