

Overview of the Strategic Prevention Framework

Prevention professionals are pressed to put in place solutions to urgent substance misuse or behavioral health problems facing communities. But research and experience have shown that prevention must begin with an understanding of these complex problems within complex environments; only then can effective plans and strategies to address these issues be implemented. In order to help communities more effectively address these problems, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) developed the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF).



The SPF includes these five steps:

1. Assessment	Identify local prevention needs based on data (e.g., What is the problem?)
2. Capacity	Build local resources and readiness to address prevention needs (e.g., What do you have to work with?)
3. Planning	Find out what works to address prevention needs and how to do it well (e.g., What should you do and how should you do it?)
4. Implementation	Deliver evidence-based programs, policies and practices as intended (e.g., How can you put your plan into action?)
5. Evaluation	Examine the process and outcomes of programs, policies and practices (e.g., Is your plan succeeding?)

The SPF is also guided by two cross-cutting principles that should be integrated into each of the five steps:

- + **Cultural competence.** The ability to understand and interact effectively with people who have different values, lifestyles, and traditions based on their distinctive heritage and social relationships.
- + **Sustainability.** The process of building an adaptive and effective system.

SPF Defining Characteristics

The SPF has several defining characteristics that set it apart from other strategic planning processes. Most notably, it is:

- + **Dynamic and iterative.** Assessment is the starting point, but prevention professionals will return to this step again and again as their community's problems and capacities evolve. Communities may also engage in activities related to multiple steps simultaneously. For example, planners may need to find and mobilize additional capacity to support implementation once a program, policy or practice is underway. For these reasons, the SPF is a circular rather than a linear model.
- + **Data-driven.** The SPF is designed to help prevention professionals gather and use data to guide all prevention decisions—from identifying which substance misuse or behavioral health problems to address in their communities, to choosing the most appropriate ways to address these problems, to determining whether communities are making progress.
- + **Focuses on population-level change.** Earlier prevention models measured success by looking at individual program outcomes or changes among small groups. But the SPF process focuses on influencing whole communities, not only individuals who participate in a prevention program. The SPF encourages use of strategies that will have an impact on the environment in which the full population resides.
- + **Reliant on and encourages a team approach.** Each step of the SPF requires—and greatly benefits from—the participation of diverse community partners. The individuals and institutions involved in prevention efforts may change as the initiative evolves, but the need for prevention partners will remain constant.
- + **Guides prevention efforts across the lifespan.** Prevention efforts have traditionally focused on adolescents. The SPF challenges prevention professionals to look at substance misuse or behavioral health problems among populations that are often overlooked but at significant risk, such as young adults ages 18 to 25 and adults age 65 and older.