



PREVENTION WITH PURPOSE:

A Resource for Presidents and Senior Administrators

College presidents and senior administrators play a vital role in creating healthy and safe campus environments that enable students to learn and grow. Effectively preventing on-campus drug misuse is critical to supporting the academic mission of colleges and universities as well as supporting students' mental, social, and emotional development. Research has identified the characteristics of drug misuse prevention efforts that work. Active support and leadership from the top is essential to ensuring that campus-based drug misuse prevention efforts make a difference.

Campus Drug Misuse: The Scope of the Problem

Drug misuse is an issue that affects all institutions of higher education and can lead to a wide range of problems. These problems not only affect students who use drugs, hampering their academic success, retention, and mental and physical health, but also they affect the safety and well-being of the entire community—including students in recovery and those who abstain for a variety of reasons, faculty, staff, and neighbors—and the institution's overall reputation and financial health.

In addition, preventing drug misuse is good for the institution's bottom line. Negative drug-related financial impacts include lost tuition from students who stop out and drop out, time spent by public safety officials and campus administrators on addressing substance misuse, and legal settlements for student death or injury.¹



College students who use marijuana have lower GPAs than those who do not. They are also more likely to drop out of school and less likely to graduate on time.³

The Campus Environment Matters

The experiences students have prior to college can either increase their risk of misusing drugs or protect them from doing so. Regardless of individual students' history, the campus environment can powerfully influence behavior. As campus leaders, you are in a unique position to create an environment that discourages drug misuse and promotes healthy behavior. Examples of research-based prevention strategies include limiting access to drugs through campus policy and enforcement and local community collaboration, creating opportunities for drug-free housing and activities, and providing evidence-based individual interventions for students experiencing drug misuse problems. These efforts create a campus culture that signals clear expectations around drug misuse and prioritizes student academic success, health, and safety.

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Our goal is not necessarily to chase the drug when we are developing interventions but to see what the bigger issues are—the environmental issues—and hold on to what the best practices are at the individual, campus, and policy level.”

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

Barriers to implementing effective drug misuse prevention efforts on campus may include competing priorities, resistance to change among faculty and staff, enforcement challenges, and lack of knowledge on the parts of faculty and staff members about effective prevention approaches. Campuses can overcome these barriers by engaging in a data-driven strategic planning process; providing a comprehensive array of effective strategies (i.e., programs, policy efforts, and changes to the campus environment); and providing strong leadership for these efforts.

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The Strategic Prevention Framework has lasted the test of time. It forces your program to be purposeful, strategic, and intentional. Working through the SPF helps you make decisions based on data and evidence-based practice.”

—Fran Harding, former Director of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Prevention with Purpose: A Blueprint for Effective Prevention

This strategic approach is described in [Prevention with Purpose: A Strategic Planning Guide for Preventing Drug Misuse Among College Students](#). The guide is organized around the SPF—a systematic process for understanding the scope of drug misuse issues on campuses; building relationships with key stakeholders; and planning, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive and sustainable prevention efforts.² Research tells us that implementing a data-informed, collaborative prevention planning process, such as the SPF, mitigates drug misuse and creates the positive academic and social-emotional outcomes that lead to student success.



Your leadership and engagement are essential!

What College Presidents and Senior Administrators Can Do

Drug misuse prevention efforts are more successful with visible and proactive support from campus leaders. Specifically, senior leaders can:

- » **Create a prevention-focused culture on campus and in the surrounding community.** Publicly acknowledge that drug misuse problems exist on campus and articulate and support prevention messages. Convey clear, unambiguous expectations and standards regarding drug misuse to students, staff, faculty, and parents. Enable and support collaborative prevention efforts with the local community.
- » **Prioritize data collection to understand the nature of drug misuse problems on campus.** Identify faculty and staff members who have the expertise and ability to lead on-campus efforts to assess drug



Support prevention professionals to develop a strategic plan for preventing drug misuse and help them resolve any barriers. Make sure those who have a role in drug misuse prevention know about the evidence-based SPF, and that it leads to successful prevention efforts when implemented as described in the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide.

misuse problems and the factors influencing them. Connect these individuals with staff who are responsible for developing and implementing the campus's strategic prevention plan. Share the assessment information with key stakeholders on campus and in the broader community.

- » **Support the development of a prevention infrastructure.** Effective prevention requires collaboration among university prevention professionals, on-campus stakeholders, and community partners. If there is not a prevention team or coalition currently on campus, empower the student affairs team or another department to start one. If there is already a team in place, get to know the department and staff coordinating it to learn what they are doing. Consider:
 - Asking for their input on issues related to the campus environment
 - Helping them recruit key campus and community stakeholders to the table
 - Devoting resources (e.g., funding, grant writing support, professional development opportunities) to support prevention efforts
- » **Articulate a vision that supports the implementation of a strategic planning process.** Charge the campus's prevention professionals with developing a university-wide strategic plan for preventing drug misuse, and oversee its implementation and help them resolve any barriers. Make sure those who have a role in drug misuse prevention know about the evidence-based SPF, and that it leads to successful prevention efforts when implemented as described in the Prevention with Purpose strategic planning guide.

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

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

- 1 Eigen, L. D. (1991). Alcohol practices, policies, and potentials of American colleges and universities: An OSAP white paper. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED350928>
- 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 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework. Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019.

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.

**Drug Enforcement Administration
Office of Congressional and Public Affairs
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