



# Substance Abuse Prevention:

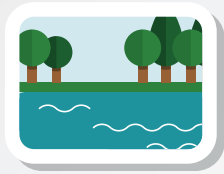
## What it is, Why it Matters & What Works

There's an often-told parable about a person, fishing along the banks of a river. Suddenly, he sees a woman drowning in the water. The fisherman acts quickly, jumping into the water pulling her out to safety. Once ashore, he notices another person in the river in need of help. Again he reacts and jumps in to save this drowning victim. Before long, the river is filled with drowning people and the fisherman is struggling. After several hours, he is exhausted and defeated because he is unable to save everyone.

At that point, the fisherman makes the decision to walk upstream to determine why people are falling into the river in the first place. While walking upstream, the fisherman notices the bridge leading across the river has a large hole through which people are falling. He realizes that fixing the hole in the bridge will prevent many people from ever falling into the river in the first place. This is prevention.

## What is Prevention?

Prevention is going upstream to identify the cause of a problem.



- Prevention is a proactive approach; creating an environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, which prevents problems before they occur.

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## Why is it Important?

Fixing the bridge is effective and efficient.



- Prevention is cost-effective; saving \$64 for every \$1 invested (on average).
- Prevention improves the health of individuals, families and communities.
- Prevention decreases consequences and saves lives.

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## How Does it Work?

Fixing the bridge requires following a set of principles and practices.



- Prevention is **rooted in science**, supported by decades of research.
- Prevention follows the **Public Health Model**, focusing on **population-level** change.
  - Some of the most effective prevention strategies are the least expensive. For example, changing a law is very inexpensive and can be very effective in supporting long-term behavior change.
- Prevention follows a **data-driven process** to assess, plan, implement and evaluate outcomes, also known as the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF).
- Prevention focuses on **reducing risk factors**, **strengthening protective factors** and **building resiliency** of individuals, families and communities.
- Prevention is most effective when stakeholders and community members work together to take action, emphasizing **collaboration** and **community mobilization**.
- Prevention requires a **multi-faceted approach**, implementing a variety of evidence-based strategies working toward a common goal.
- Prevention must be **relevant to the community**, including local conditions and diverse demographics.
- Prevention is most effective when it impacts individuals **across the lifespan**.
- **It can take time** to see the results of prevention.
- Prevention is an important component of the continuum of care, which represents a **comprehensive approach to behavioral health**.