



SPF Guiding Principle: Sustaining Your Prevention Work

An Introduction to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework

In prevention, sustainability is the capacity of a community to produce and maintain positive prevention outcomes over time. To maintain positive outcomes, communities will want to sustain an effective strategic planning process as well as those programs and practices that produced positive prevention results. Accomplishing these dual tasks requires the participation, resolve, and dedication of diverse community members and a lot of careful planning.

Sustaining an Effective Strategic Planning Process

There are a number of reasons why it is important to sustain an effective strategic planning process. These are some things to keep in mind:

- Prevention takes time. While communities are likely to achieve some short-term outcomes initially, it can take many years to produce long-term results. When practitioners help the SPF process live on over time, communities are much more likely to make a significant and lasting impact on their substance misuse problems.
- Substance misuse problems and priorities change. Prevention needs and capacity are always evolving with new substance misuse issues arising that no one can anticipate right now. With a well-established strategic planning process like the SPF already in place, communities will be able to recognize—and respond effectively to—these important changes over time.
- Successful implementation of the SPF depends on collaboration. The SPF is widely recognized by many public health funders and practitioners. Adherence to a common planning process can help planners establish a shared language across health issues and build the interdisciplinary partnerships needed to make a real difference.

Sustaining Programs and Practices That Work

A primary goal of an effective strategic planning process like the SPF is to identify the right combination of programs and practices to address local prevention priorities. Many factors contribute to effectiveness in prevention. In general, programs and practices must operate in a variety of community settings and influence local risk and protective factors at both the individual and environmental levels. Thus, a comprehensive prevention plan might include:



- A school-based youth skills promotion program
- Parent education to support children's healthy development
- Organizational/community rules and regulations that support healthy behavior
- Enforcement of rules and regulations that support healthy behavior

Some programs and practices included in a comprehensive prevention plan are likely to work better than others (e.g., they produce positive outcomes and/or receive community support). To maintain positive outcomes over time, it's important to identify and sustain those prevention programs and practices that work well for a community.

Adapted from *A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework*, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019.