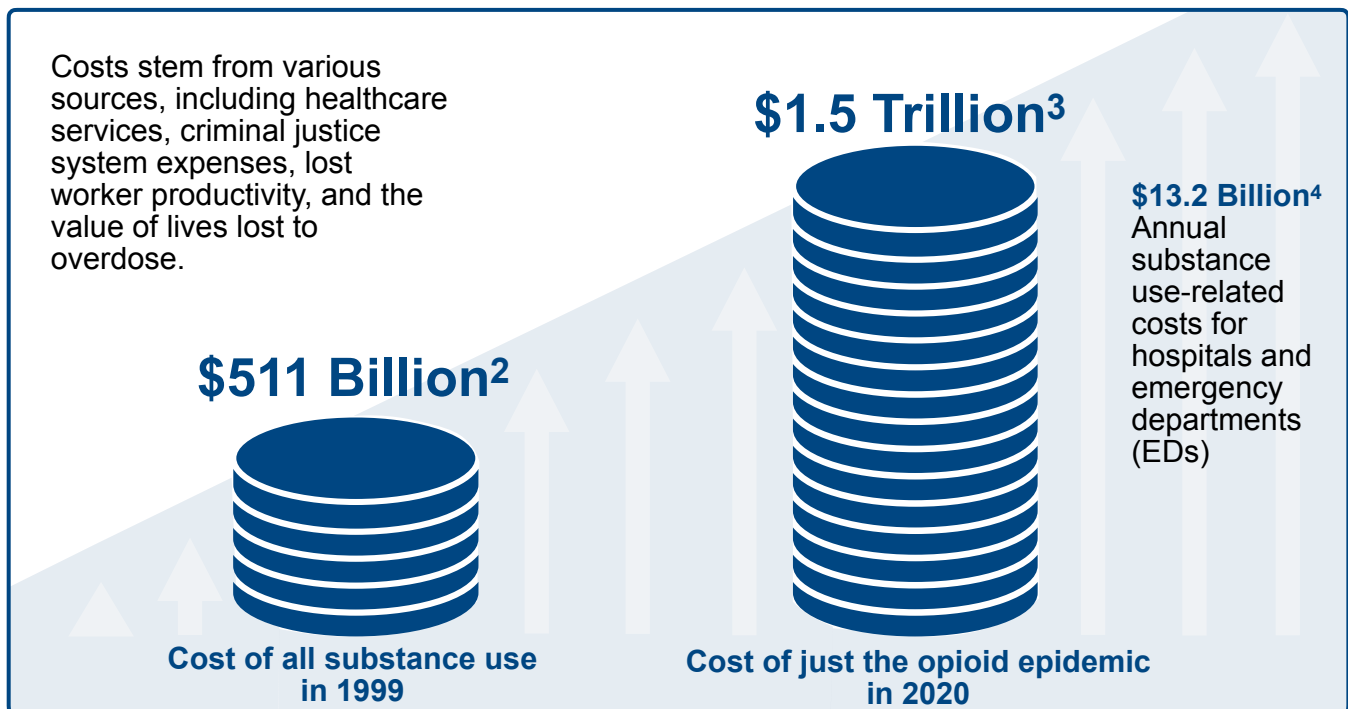


# The Return on Investment of Substance Use Prevention



Evidence-based prevention is a healthcare investment that can improve the economic well-being of states and communities. Prevention can reduce the societal costs of substance use and even increase individuals' socioeconomic standing. Raising awareness of prevention's economic value will help shift the perspectives of people and policymakers who view it as an expense to understanding it as a long-term investment.<sup>1</sup> This resource provides important facts and figures that you can reference when advocating for prevention.

## SUBSTANCE USE: RISING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COSTS



## PREVENTION'S RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Prevention programs have been associated with long-term increases in employment and earnings. Prevention can also help reduce the economic and social costs of substance use.<sup>5</sup> Investing in substance use prevention has significant economic benefits, including:

**\$20** saved in future healthcare costs for every \$1 invested in tobacco prevention programs<sup>6</sup>

**\$954** gained in lifetime labor market earnings per participant from the LifeSkills Training program<sup>7</sup>

**\$1,196** saved in annual social costs per patient from hospital ED screenings, brief interventions, and referral to treatment (SBIRT)<sup>8</sup>

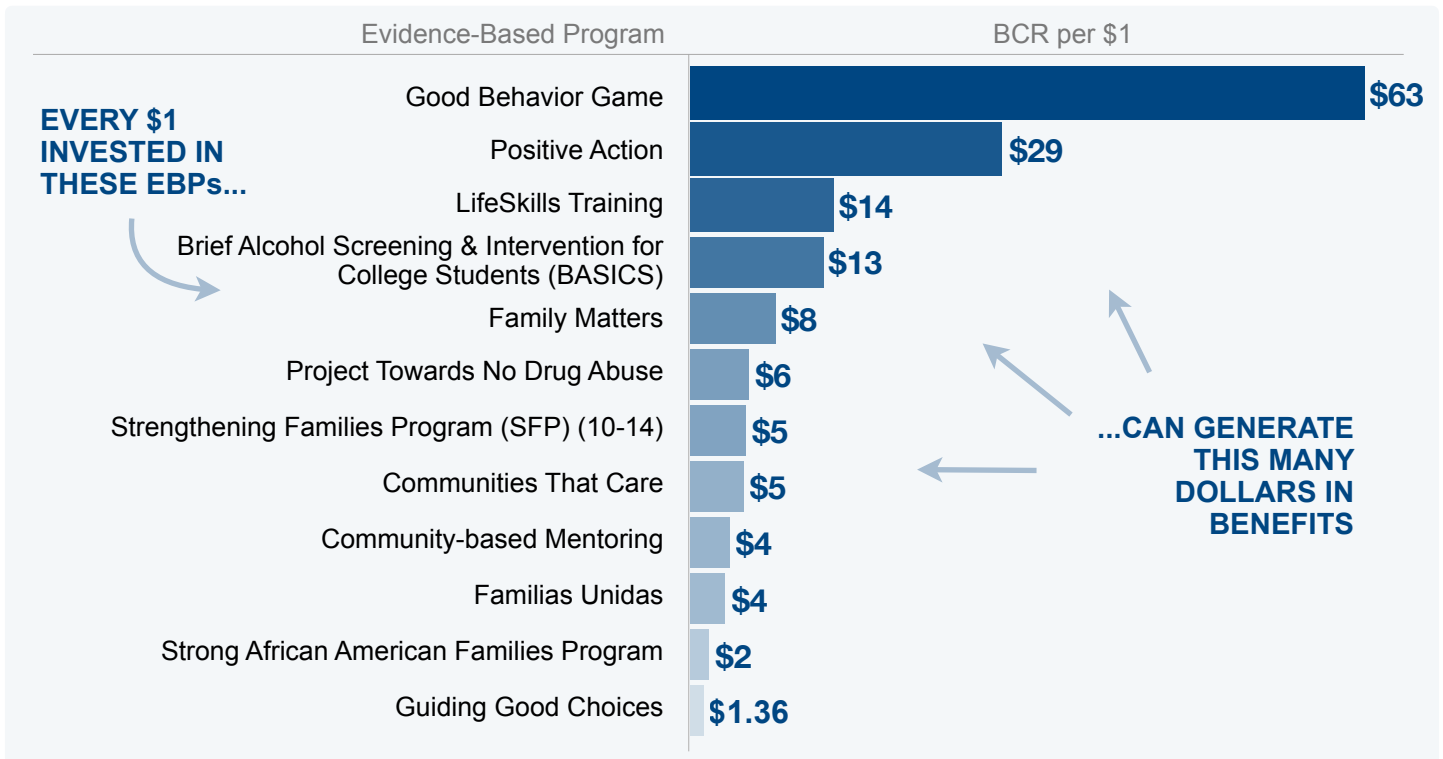
**\$2,064** gained in lifetime labor market earnings per participant from brief alcohol interventions in primary care<sup>9</sup>

**\$31 Billion** saved in social costs from The Real Cost campaign diverting 175,941 youth from becoming smokers<sup>10</sup>



## THE BENEFIT-COST RATIO OF EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS<sup>11,12</sup>

A program’s benefit-cost ratio (BCR) is an economic measure that shows the value of future savings or additional benefits achieved for each dollar spent. For example, as shown below, every \$1 invested (cost) in the Good Behavior Game program results in a return of \$62.80 (benefit). The BCR is a valuable tool for assessing the ROI of evidence-based programs (EBPs) – the greater the BCR, the greater the ROI. [This primer](#) introduces the formulas for calculating your programs’ BCRs. Remember that your community’s unique circumstances may influence the BCR. Below are BCRs for some popular EBPs:



## COMMUNICATING THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF PREVENTION

When advocating for prevention in your community, consider sharing ROI research to reinforce the full scope of social and economic benefits. Policymakers are often unaware of the economic value of prevention and may worry about the cost of services. Showing that prevention makes economic sense will better communicate the full value of prevention. Not only can prevention improve the health of communities – it’s also a good investment!

### NOTES

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