

Is Your School Ready to Implement an Effective Program to Reduce Underage Drinking?

"School improvement is challenging. Change must be more than cosmetic. For students to reap the benefits of your efforts, school-community members and other stakeholders must ensure that improvements are deep and systemic, changing both the structure and the culture of the school."

Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools Step by Step,
Osher et al., p. 6

Taking on the task of organizing and coordinating the development of your district's alcohol prevention plan can be overwhelming at first glance. But, with our help and some powerful tools developed for the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), an agency within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), you'll find all the pieces fall into place quickly. There are five components to successful prevention planning:

- § Assessment - determining your prevention needs
- § Capacity - improving your capabilities
- § Planning - developing a strategic plan
- § Implementation and Sustainability- putting your plan into action and sustaining it
- § Evaluation - documenting the outcomes of your work

Today we'll take a closer look at each of these components and some tools that will help you develop a successful program to reduce underage drinking.

Assessment Stage

"Needs assessment prioritizes school improvement, grounds planning in needs and resources, and identifies solutions for implementing solutions for addressing the needs."

Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools,
Osher et al., p. 21

As a prevention coordinator, you are well-aware of the value of a needs assessment. The assessment should give you concrete information about your community that will drive the rest of your planning process. Collection of this data may, in fact, take several months. Data should be collected in a variety of ways: interviews, focus groups, surveys, and review of documents (Osher, pp. 25-26). Without the breadth and depth of this kind of data, Osher and colleagues say, your prevention plan may "overlook some problems and focus the school's or district's resources on inadequate interventions." Conversely, "[d]ata can illuminate unidentified challenges and resources" (Osher, p. 26).

Do you have a current needs assessment that gives you information

on underage drinking in your community? If so, you're ready to go on to **Building Capacity**. Otherwise, your first step is to conduct a needs assessment. The better you understand your community and the more complete your data collection is, the more likely your prevention project will be successful. A comprehensive needs assessment includes the following:

- Collection and analysis of data
- Survey information
- Focus or discussion groups
- A public policy review
- A review of current programs, activities and resources (NHTSA *Community How to Guide*, 2001).



[Appendix 1](#) of *Community How to Guide on Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning* has several examples of survey materials and data checklists that will help you conduct your needs assessment. Once you complete your needs assessment, you will be able to identify your target audience and the risk and protective factors your plan will focus on.

For more help with developing a needs assessment, review these online courses:

[Using Existing Data in Your Needs Assessment](#)

[Identifying Priorities and Strategies for Your Prevention Initiative](#)

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has identified a set of [prevention principles](#) that impact underage drinking when incorporated into prevention planning. These 16 principles “have emerged from research studies on the origins of drug abuse behaviors and the common elements found in research on effective prevention programs (*Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents*, NIDA 2003).

Because your prevention plan will be tailored to your school and community, you won't necessarily use all 16 principles. In general, however, several of these principles should form the foundation of an effective school-based prevention plan. [Click here](#) for these critical principles.

Build the Capacity to Make a Difference

In its broadest terms, capacity means having the knowledge and training, the staff, and the funding

necessary to get the job done (Osher, p.6). One of the first steps in capacity building is forming your school-wide team.

"Significant school improvement cannot be started by one person. . . A core group of leaders usually begins the change, which is designed to address or expand on the existing school system mission or vision statements."

Osher et al., p.11

Whenever possible, work with existing teams. Integrate program elements that are not part of the current team's plan: student support, student mental health, school safety, or family involvement (Osher et al., p.14). However, you may need to establish a new team if there is no functioning team in your system.

Selecting Team Members

Knowledge, perspective, technical skills, personal skills, and legitimacy are the five criteria you need to build into your team. Your team should be made up of members who are:

§ Knowledgeable about your community, school safety, student support, mental health, and school reform (Osher et al., p. 15).

§ Representative of all segments of your community. Think of the political makeup of your group. "Who are the sanctioned leaders, the power brokers, the persuaders, the dealmakers, the peacemakers, and the gatekeepers for support and resources?" Be sure your team includes parents, teachers, students, administrators, clergy, and so on (Osher et al., p. 16).

§ Equipped with the technical skills to get the job done. "Who has skills in teaming, facilitation, and evaluation? Who is an effective communicator?" (p.16)

§ Respected by the community for who they are. "Who is important, given the culture, history, and traditions of your school and community? Who . . . can garner support for your team and the plan?" (Osher et al., pp.14-16).

image of a team at work

As part of the effort to represent the entire community on the team, be aware of other agencies and organizations that share common goals with you and also work with youths. *Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools* (Osher et al., pp. 16-17) recommends that you include several of these organizations on your team:

§ Local community anti-drug coalitions

§ Youth centers

§ Community-based organizations

§ County recreation programs

§ Universities and colleges

§ Businesses

§ Religious leaders and organizations

- § Community mental health and health agencies
- § Social service agencies
- § [Community police, juvenile justice, and the courts](#)
- § Parent groups, including PTAs, PTOs, and other groups
- § Civil rights and advocacy organizations
- § Foundations

For more information on forming effective teams, see online courses:

[*Promoting Prevention Through School-Community Partnerships*](#)

[*Identifying Prevention Priorities and Strategies for Success*](#)

Develop a Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is the vehicle for success. Once a needs assessment is complete, the next step in developing a comprehensive prevention program is to bring people together and agree on appropriate solutions. The planning process requires three steps:

- An examination of the needs assessment to determine the nature and extent of the underage drinking problem
- A review of alternative courses of action available to meet identified needs
- An allocation of resources to achieve solutions

During the strategic planning process, team members will define goals, identify measurable objectives and develop action steps to reach these goals and objectives (*Guide 2*, NHTSA, 2001). [Click here](#) to read a set of sample questions your strategic plan should address.

"Strategic planning. . . may also include establishing measurable objectives, creating target timelines, clearly defining member responsibilities, and developing leadership to maintain coalition efforts and membership involvement."

Reducing Underage Drinking,
National Research Council
Institute of Medicine, p. 225

In general, there are five steps in strategic planning:

- Develop an organization/coalition mission statement
- Review needs assessment
- Define broad-based goals
- Identify measurable objectives for each goal
- Develop action steps to achieve each objective

For more help developing strategies, measurable goals and objectives, see online course:

[*Identifying Prevention Priorities and Strategies for Success*](#)

Implementation

Implementing your program involves much more than simply carrying out its components. Your strategic plan becomes the action plan that will guide your program development from this point on. It is another planning tool that establishes the initial direction and clarity of vision for the implementation group (Implement and Assess Programs, SAMSHA, 2001). "Planning helps increase the effectiveness of your effort by enabling you to focus energy, ensure that staff and other stakeholders are working toward the same goals, and assess and adjust programmatic direction, if needed. In short, planning is a structured effort to shape and guide your prevention efforts" (*Implement and Assess Programs*, p. 9).

Your primary goal now is to raise public awareness of underage drinking in your community and motivate the public to change those community norms that may encourage it. Communication is the key here. You need to determine your message and deliver it in an effective way to move the community to action. "The news media can be a critical partner in your effort to raise public awareness of underage drinking. . . .Developing a positive, on-going relationship with reporters who are interested in alcohol- or health-related events and information can be vitally important to your

events, organization, and network" (*Underage Drinking Prevention Action Guide and Planner*, 2001). [Start Talking Before They Start Drinking](#), a new public service ad campaign designed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in partnership with the Ad Council, provides you with a wealth of information and materials about the short- and long-term consequences of underage drinking; tips for parents on initiating conversations about alcohol; and a brochure created for the campaign.

But there's more to implementation than just spreading the word. The planning team has to collaborate with other agencies and programs, ensure that adequate training is available, identify resistance and develop strategies to overcome it, and document progress (Online: *Middle School Coordinators as Change Agents*).

For more about implementation strategies, see online course:

[Middle School Coordinators as Change Agents](#)

Evaluation

Evaluation is a necessary step in any effective prevention program. Through evaluations, you can figure out what is working, what is not working, and why. Effective "evaluation will keep your focus on authentic goals and objectives, enabling you to select appropriate interventions that — when properly implemented, measured, and evaluated — will lead to behavioral change and, ultimately, substance abuse prevention and/or reduction" (*Pathways to Effective Programs and Positive Outcomes*, SAMHSA 2003).

SAMSHA outlines these steps for evaluation:

Report Immediate and Intermediate Outcomes

- Assemble immediate outcomes for final report
- Assemble intermediate outcomes for final report

Outline Process Measures

- Assemble action plan data relative to process measures

Measure Long-term Outcomes

- Document change(s) compared to baseline measures of general substance abuse problem
- Determine program sustainability and follow-up actions
- Produce final report and share findings

Communicate Outcomes to Key Stakeholders

Re-Measure Long-term Outcomes

- Re-measure outcomes at 12 and 18 months if possible
- Supplement your report to the community with these longer-term outcomes

(SAMHSA, Chapter 5, [Pathways to Effective Programs and Positive Outcomes](#))

For another look at evaluation, see online course:

[Are You Making Progress? Increasing Accountability Through Evaluation](#)

The Western Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) has also developed an extensive "how-to" guide to [planning and implementing an evaluation](#) of your prevention program. There are 7 major sections:

- What is Evaluation & Why Do It?
- Using a Logic Model for Evaluation Planning
- How to Build Your Program Logic Model
- How to Plan Your Evaluation
- Evaluating Your Program Using the Logic Model
- Analyzing, Using, and Interpreting Evaluation Information
- Implementing the Evaluation

Within each section you will find worksheets, tools, and examples of how to conduct user-friendly evaluations of substance abuse prevention programs using the risk and protective factors model.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the process of ensuring an adaptive prevention system and a sustainable innovation that can be integrated into ongoing operations to benefit diverse stakeholders.

Johnson, et.al. 2004

Equally important is ensuring that your program is sustainable after the implementation funding is done. The Southeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technology (CAPT) developed the following sustainability model which "stems from a systematic literature synthesis and information that emerged from a series of 'think tanks' involving key substance abuse prevention professionals" (Johnson, et. al. 2004). The sustainability planning model developed by CAPT has several key features. It is:

- Part of a change process that is ongoing and cyclical
- Adaptive and receptive to change

- Innovative
- Fully integrated into normal operation of the program
- Beneficial to the diverse stakeholders, both before and after its implementation (Johnson et. al., 2004)

Table 1 (see pp. 5-8) of [Building capacity and sustainable prevention innovations: a sustainability planning model](#) gives you the specific factors and objectives that make up a sustainability plan.

There are two goals: to continue to build, support and strengthen infrastructure capacity (organizational, community, state, or federal) to ensure an adaptive prevention system that is receptive to change; to implement sustainable innovations that benefit diverse stakeholders for an extended period of time (p. 139-142). This planning tool lists the specific factors, objectives, and actions that need to be in place for your plan to be successful. It also lists specific criteria that indicate the program's "readiness" to succeed.

The sustainability action steps are illustrated here as a [five-step process](#). It's important to remember that sustainability works as an ongoing cyclical process rather than a one-time sequential stage process. (Johnson et. al., 2004).

The Western CAPT is currently developing a Sustainability Tool Kit. This tool kit will be used by specially trained prevention specialists who will work with other prevention specialists to implement and sustain prevention innovations.

Online Resources

If you like to work online, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) has developed an [assessment tool](#) that will help you assess your prevention needs and determine the appropriate focus of your prevention project in order to reduce risks and increase protective factors.

Once you create your profile, start with the [Prevention Readiness Tool](#). Answer these questions to get an assessment of your preparedness to begin prevention work. Completing this survey will take several minutes. Don't be alarmed if your response to many of the questions is "no" or "don't know." All of that is factored into the analysis and subsequent "road map." The road map is stored under your login and can be accessed whenever you need to refer to it to continue your planning. As you go through the road map, you'll be able to build a timeline and begin an organized approach to your task. The road map also links you to additional resources, both in print format or online, for each step in the process. You can also use other tools and resources with which you're already familiar as you complete each step.

Here's a [sample road map](#) to give you a preview of what you'll see after you complete the survey for your community.

Click here to print today's materials in PDF format.

Discussion Questions

Please think about the questions below and share your responses, comments, and/or any questions about today's material in the [Discussion Area](#) .

Complete the [Prevention Questionnaire](#)

Post responses to these discussion questions:

- Has your school developed a plan to reduce underage drinking?
- What challenges are you facing in your school with: teachers, administration, parents, community, etc.?
- How have you addressed these challenges?

This completes today's work.

Please visit the [Discussion Area](#) to share your responses to the discussion questions!

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Preventing Underage Drinking: A School-Based Approach

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Do you have a current needs assessment that gives you information on underage drinking in your community? If so, you're ready to go on to **Building Capacity**. Otherwise, your first step is to conduct a

needs assessment. The better you understand your community and the more complete your data collection is, the more likely your prevention project will be successful.

A comprehensive needs assessment includes the following:

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For more help with developing a needs assessment, review these online courses:

[Using Existing Data in Your Needs Assessment](#)

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Whenever possible, work with existing teams. Integrate program elements that are not part of the current team's plan: student support, student mental health, school safety, or family involvement

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image of a team at work

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For more information on forming effective teams, see online courses:

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In general, there are five steps in strategic planning:

- Develop an organization/coalition mission statement
- Review needs assessment
- Define broad-based goals
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For more help developing strategies, measurable goals and objectives, see online course:

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For more about implementation strategies, see online course:

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Evaluation is a necessary step in any effective prevention program. Through evaluations, you can figure out what is working, what is not working, and why. Effective "evaluation will keep your focus on authentic goals and objectives, enabling you to select appropriate interventions that — when properly implemented, measured, and evaluated — will lead to behavioral change and, ultimately, substance abuse prevention and/or reduction" (*Pathways to Effective Programs and Positive Outcomes*, SAMHSA 2003).

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[planning model](#) gives you the specific factors and objectives that make up a sustainability plan.

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The Western CAPT is currently developing a Sustainability Tool Kit. This tool kit will be used by specially trained prevention specialists who will work with other prevention specialists to implement and sustain prevention innovations.



Online Resources

If you like to work online, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) has developed an [assessment tool](#) that will help you assess your prevention needs and determine the appropriate focus of your prevention project in order to reduce risks and increase protective factors.

Once you create your profile, start with the [Prevention Readiness Tool](#). Answer these questions to get an assessment of your preparedness to begin prevention work. Completing this survey will take several minutes. Don't be alarmed if your response to many of the questions is "no" or "don't know." All of that is factored into the analysis and subsequent "road map." The road map is stored under your login and can be accessed whenever you need to refer to it to continue your planning. As you go through the road map, you'll be able to build a timeline and begin an organized approach to your task. The road map also links you to additional resources, both in print format or online, for each step in the process. You can also use other tools and resources with which you're already familiar as you complete each step.

Here's a [sample road map](#) to give you a preview of what you'll see after you complete the survey for your community.



Click here to print today's materials in PDF format.



Discussion Questions

Please think about the questions below and share your responses, comments, and/or any questions about today's material in the [Discussion Area](#) .

Complete the [Prevention Questionnaire](#)

Post responses to these discussion questions:

- Has your school developed a plan to reduce underage drinking?
- What challenges are you facing in your school with: teachers, administration, parents, community, etc.?
- How have you addressed these challenges?

This completes today's work.

Please visit the [Discussion Area](#) to share your responses to the discussion questions!

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Critical Prevention Principles for School-Based Prevention Planning

These principles should form the foundation of an effective school-based prevention plan.

PRINCIPLE 2 - Prevention programs should address all forms of drug abuse, alone or in combination, including the underage use of legal drugs (e.g., tobacco or alcohol); the use of illegal drugs (e.g., marijuana or heroin); and the inappropriate use of legally obtained substances (e.g., inhalants), prescription medications, or over-the-counter drugs.

PRINCIPLE 3 - Prevention programs should address the type of drug abuse problem in the local community, target modifiable risk factors, and strengthen identified protective factors.

PRINCIPLE 4 - Prevention programs should be tailored to address risks specific to population or audience characteristics, such as age, gender, and ethnicity, to improve program effectiveness.

PRINCIPLE 7 - Prevention programs for elementary school children should target improving academic and social-emotional learning to address risk factors for drug abuse, such as early aggression, academic failure, and school dropout. Education should focus on the following skills:

- self-control;
- emotional awareness;
- communication;
- social problem-solving; and
- academic support, especially in reading.

PRINCIPLE 8 - Prevention programs for middle or junior high and high school students should increase academic and social competence with the following skills:

- study habits and academic support;
- communication;
- peer relationships;
- self-efficacy and assertiveness;
- drug resistance skills;
- reinforcement of anti-drug attitudes; and
- strengthening of personal commitments against drug abuse.

PRINCIPLE 14 - Prevention programs should include teacher training on good classroom management practices, such as rewarding appropriate student behavior. Such techniques help to foster students' positive behavior, achievement, academic motivation, and school bonding.

PRINCIPLE 15 - Prevention programs are most effective when they employ interactive techniques, such as peer discussion groups and parent role-playing, that allow for active involvement in learning about drug abuse and reinforcing skills.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2003). *Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents: A Research-based Guide for Parents, Educators, and Community Leaders*. Available: <http://www.nida.nih.gov/Prevention/principles.html>

Preventing Underage Drinking: A School-Based Approach

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Strategic Planning Questions

Strategic planning begins by asking the following questions:

- Where are we going (goals)?
- What do we want (objectives)?
- How will we know when we have it?
- Where, when and with whom do we want to work?
- Where will it work?
- What obstacles do we face?
- What resources, including financial, do we have?
- What resources, including financial, do we need?
- What is the first, then subsequent steps and activities?
- Did we do what we said we would (evaluation)?

Community How to Guide Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2001

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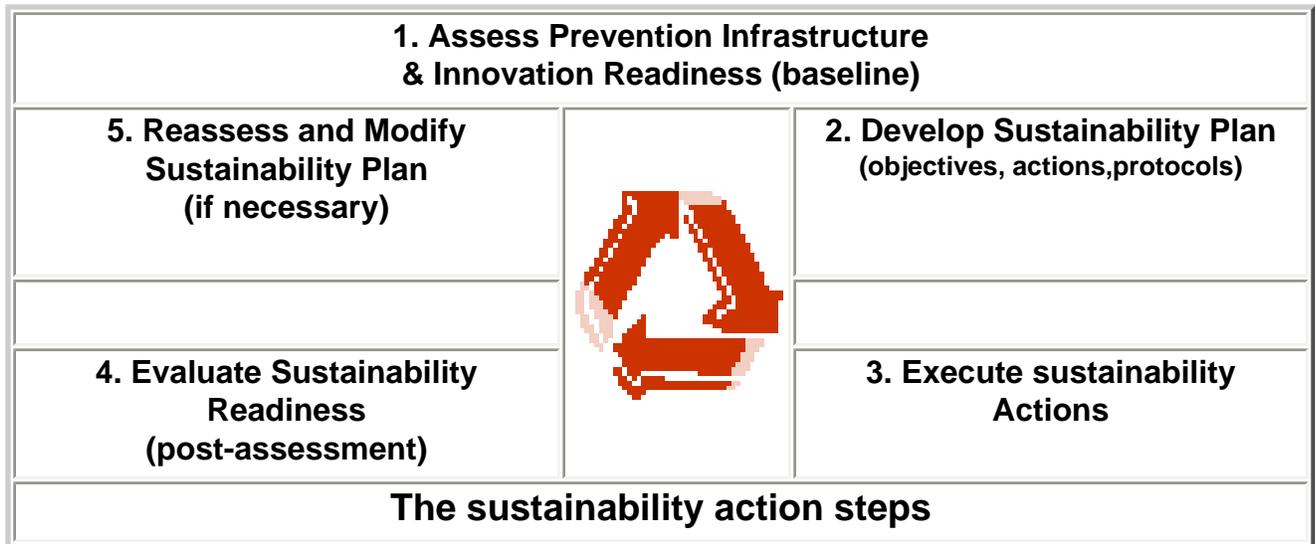
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Sustainability Planning Model

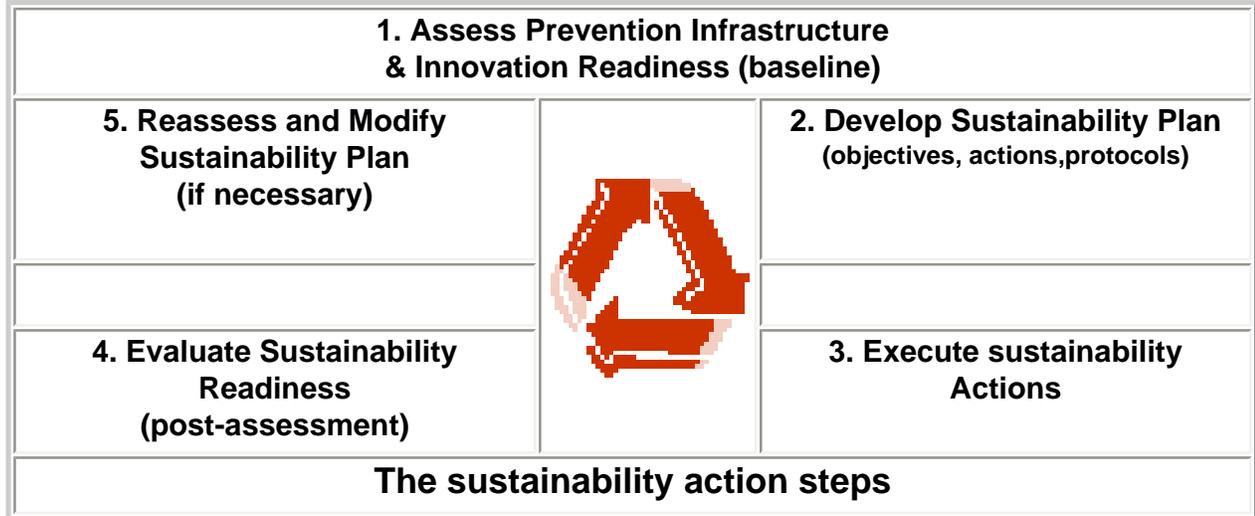


Source: Johnson, K., Hays, C., Center, H., and Daley, C. (2004). Building capacity and sustainable prevention innovations: a sustainability planning model. *Evaluation and Program Planning* 27, 135–149.

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