

# Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention

## Overview

Environmental prevention interventions that incorporate culturally sensitive interventions are included in SAMHSA's (2017) Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF; SAMHSA, 2017). These environmental prevention strategies aim to create environments that support healthy behaviors. Specifically, environmental prevention implements strategies to influence the societies norms by increasing awareness and support of prevention at the community-level. With the fluidity in cultural diversity, it is important that environmental prevention strategies are incorporating relative cultural factors to meet the needs of diverse populations (SAMHSA, 2018).

## What is Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention?

North (2014) defined culturally responsive environmental strategies as prevention activities that include the following:

- “effectively address a community’s unique history, strengths, challenges, and cultural diversity;
- build sustained and powerful citizen-driven coalitions and practices aimed at the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse and other risk behaviors;
- integrates community assessments and community-defined priorities, interventions, and involvement.”

Culturally responsive environmental prevention promotes interventions that recognize that beliefs, attitudes, norms, and expectations regarding health vary across cultures (North, 2014). Additionally, the incorporation of the following elements that promote a culturally competence prevention system: (a) valuing diversity; (b) awareness of the “dynamic of difference”; (c) ability to institutionalize cultural knowledge; (d) awareness; (e) practice; (f) adaptation to diversity; and (g) cultural self-assessment (SAMHSA, 2018). Specifically, the prevention system and SPF must recognize the intersectionality of multicultural populations and effective prevention methods that meets unique needs of a diverse population. SAMSHA (2018) discusses the dynamic process of the “Cultural Competence Continuum”, which describes the six stages of cultural competence.



National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC). Cultural Competence Continuum. Adapted from *Toward A Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume 1*, Cross et al.

## Why is Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention Important?

Environmental prevention strategies are designed to impact change at the community-level. However, if environmental prevention strategies fail to incorporate culturally responsive strategies, then the needs of specific communities and populations will not be met. Furthermore, if environmental prevention does not account for cultural norms of diverse communities, there will be a lack of effective and successful prevention strategies.



Figure 1. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/applying-strategic-prevention-framework>

A SAMHSA-registered, evidence-based program that was successful in incorporating various ethnic groups was called “Community Trials Intervention to Reduce High Risk Drinking”. This program produced significant results including, but not limited to:

- decreased binge drinking,
- decreased alcohol sales to youth
- decrease in assaults,
- decrease in drinking and driving,
- and implementation of policies that limited placements of retail alcohol establishments.

Cultural diversity is present in every community and cultural responsiveness should be a key principle in guiding environmental prevention strategies and interventions. Culturally responsive environmental prevention provides equitable and effective interventions that promote successful prevention outcomes.

*As a statewide agency, The North Carolina Training and Technical Assistance (NCTTA) Center provides workforce development, training, and technical assistance opportunities to substance abuse prevention stakeholders. Funding for the NCTTA is provided by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services with funding from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. To learn more visit [ncpreventiontta.org](http://ncpreventiontta.org)*

## References

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