

## Sustainability in Prevention: A Strategy for Long-Term Practice

Sustainability is one of the guiding principles of SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework. Prevention programming is not an instantaneous science. There are some short-term outcomes, but true change can take several years to occur. Communities, providers, coalitions, and key stakeholders that utilize the SPF are working toward the overarching goal of their work carrying on for many years, even decades. Funding cuts, loss of resources, staffing changes and shifts in community response can threaten even the best laid plans. The longer that prevention programming can be sustained, the more impactful the results may be.

In the current substance use prevention landscape, providers are working hand in hand with coalitions and other key stakeholders on programming often related to the opioid crisis affecting the nation. Communication Campaigns, lockboxes, and prescriber trainings are just a few examples of the work being done right now. In order to achieve maximum efficacy, these programs must be continued for a period of years, not just months. Providers need the commitment of many people and partners over a long period of time, and they need to be able to recruit and maintain key stakeholders who are invested even in the case of a funding shortage.

- **Assign tasks to coalition/community members.**
  - Prevention staff turnover is a reality of life, so one tool to remember is that assigning a portion of the workload to community members (coalition, key stakeholders, etc.) can help to insure that the work continues even through staffing and funding changes.
- **Leverage the generosity of key stakeholders to make up for funding gaps that often occur.**
  - Donations from local businesses and organizations can help to create stability and sustainability in uncertain funding periods. Be sure to publicly recognize these individuals. This process gives community members a stronger sense of buy-in for the long term.
- **Educate partners on the program so they can continue for many years to come.**
  - When schools are taught how to implement a YPE curriculum, they are empowered to continue the work into the future. The same applies to coalition members who assist with campaign work.

When looking at the long-term sustainability of a program, providers must remember that the substance use issues in a community didn't begin overnight. Prevention efforts aren't going to create change that quickly, either. It may take several years for programming to have a measurable impact, and it is the responsibility of the prevention provider to have properly assessed a community for readiness, capacity, and commitment to change.

Providers must remember that in order for efforts to last for the long term, the people investing in the program must feel appreciated, recognized, and validated. They must be involved in trainings, educational opportunities, and community activities. The more a stakeholder feels valued, the longer he/she will continue to promote the important work being done in prevention today.



Source: *Sustainability Primer: Fostering Long-Term Change to Create Drug-Free Communities.*

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