

SPF Overview

Prevention practitioners used to jump straight to finding solutions to the substance abuse problems facing their communities, but research and experience has shown that prevention must begin with an understanding of complex problems within complex environments. Only then can communities establish and implement effective plans to resolve their problems. SAMHSA developed the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) to help states and communities more effectively *address their substance abuse* and related *mental health problems*.

Five Steps and Guiding Principles

The SPF includes the following five steps:

1. *Assessment*: Identify local prevention needs based on data (e.g., What is the problem?)
2. *Capacity*: Build local resources and readiness to address prevention needs (e.g., What do you have to work with?)
3. *Planning*: Find out what works to address prevention needs and how to do it well (e.g., What should you do and how should you do it?)
4. *Implementation*: Deliver evidence-based interventions as intended (e.g., How can you put your plan into action?)
5. *Evaluation*: Examine the process and outcomes of interventions (e.g., Is your plan succeeding?)

The SPF is guided by the following principles:

- *Cultural competence*: The ability of an individual or organization to interact effectively with members of diverse population groups
- *Sustainability*: The process of building an adaptive and effective system that achieves and maintains desired long-term results

Defining Features

The following are key characteristics of the SPF:

- *A dynamic and iterative process*: For example, assessment is the starting point, but practitioners will return to this step again and again as their community's prevention needs and capacity evolve. Communities may also engage in activities related to multiple steps simultaneously. For example, practitioners may need to find and mobilize additional capacity to support implementation once an intervention is underway. For these reasons, the SPF is a *circular*—rather than a linear—model.
- *A data-driven model*: The SPF is designed to help practitioners gather and use data to guide all prevention decisions—from identifying which substance use problems to address in their communities, to choosing the most appropriate ways to address these problems, to determining whether communities are making progress in meeting their prevention needs.
- *A team approach*: Each step of the SPF requires—and greatly benefits from—the participation of diverse community partners. The individuals and institutions on board will change as the initiative evolves over time, but the need for prevention partners will remain constant.

The SPF is a community-level, data-driven process that guides prevention practitioners through the steps needed to successfully explore and address substance abuse problems in context.