Making the Case for Prevention
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Common Myths & Misperceptions
If people just knew how bad drugs are, they’d never do them.
Prevention is just for kids.
Prevention is simply NOT doing something.
Prevention is prohibition.

Barriers to address if we are to successfully advocate for prevention
• Stigma of substance abuse
• Public misunderstanding & over-simplification of the problem
• Remediation-based culture
• Benefits are FUTURE-based vs. NOW
• Prevention is tough to quantify, and therefore tough to justify.

Key Advocacy Themes
• Prevention is cost-effective.
• Substance abuse is a PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE that requires a PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE.
• Prevention is a science.
• Prevention efforts must be part of a planned approach.
• Prevention is more than “EDUCATION”
• We must invest in comprehensive, evidence-based prevention.

Prevention is cost-effective
Substance Abuse Costs to Society

- Violent crime
- Property crime
- Prison expenses
- Victimization
- Law enforcement costs
- Court costs
- Emergency room visits
- Healthcare

- Child abuse and neglect
- Lost child support
- Foster care
- Welfare
- Homelessness
- Reduced productivity
- Unemployment
- On-the-job accidents

Estimated economic cost to society per year

- Tobacco: $289 billion
- Alcohol: $223 billion
- Illegal drugs: $193 billion
- Total: $705 billion

Tobacco costs & expenditures

Tobacco industry spends billions each year on advertising and promotions.
- $8.4 billion total spent in 2011
- Almost $23 million spent every day in 2011

Tobacco use costs the U.S. $289 billion each year.
- At least $133 billion in direct medical care for adults
- More than $156 billion in lost productivity
- $5.6 billion a year in lost productivity from exposure to secondhand smoke

Alcohol costs $223 billion/year

Breakdown of Costs:
- Workplace productivity – 72%
- Health care – 11%
- Criminal justice & law enforcement – 9%
- Motor vehicle crashes – 6%

Excessive drinking costs $746 for every man, woman & child in the U.S.

Illegal drugs cost $193 billion/year

Economic costs areas:
- Crime
- Health
- Productivity

The economic cost of illicit drug abuse is on par with other health problems.
- Diabetes costs $174 billion/year
- Economic burden for addiction is twice that of any other disease affecting the brain, including Parkinson’s & Alzheimer’s Disease
Substance Abuse Weakens Our Economy

Employed:
- 60% of alcoholics
- 74% of heavy drinkers
- 66% of drug users

Workplace losses:
- 30% - 50% less productive
- Miss 3 weeks more of work per year, on average
- 47% of on-the-job serious injury accidents
- 40% of on-the-job fatal accidents

Each substance abuser costs their employer $7,000 - $25,000 annually.

Substance Abuse Burdens Strained Budgets of Schools

Substance abuse adds 10% to the already strained budgets of our schools.

This equals about $41 billion.

SAMHSA

Studies show:

Use & Abuse = Spending in Healthcare, Unemployment, Court, Criminal, Child Welfare

Benefits of investing in effective prevention:

- Decreased medical costs from health & safety consequences
- Less treatment for addiction
- Reduced crime & delinquency
- Reduced family violence
- Less child welfare needs
- Improved school performance
- Gainful employment
- Productive and safe workforce
- Financial self-sufficiency

Prevention’s Return on Investment

$ = $$$$$

Multiple studies show:
$10 saved for every $1 spent on prevention.

Washington State Institute for Public Policy

School-based Drug Prevention’s Return on Investment

Social benefit from reduced substance abuse = $804 per participant

Program cost = $150 per participant

What we can – and cannot – expect from school-based drug prevention. Drug Alcohol, 2004
Prevention *IS* cost-effective, yet we do not invest in it!

**Why?**

Prevention’s benefits are recouped in the **FUTURE**.

When budgets are tight:
- Priorities shift to the **NOW** & putting out fires
- Politicians favor “quick results” to “stump on”

Root causes are ignored
- Problems persist or even progress
- Society’s ills worsen
- Costs go up

**We MUST break this cycle!**

Investing dollars in prevention is good economic practice AND
good public health practice!

Substance abuse is a **PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE** that requires a **PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE**

**Imagine if . . .**

We only treated the active cases of West Nile Virus and Malaria?

Or had simply said:
“Don’t be around mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are bad!”
The Public Health Approach

*Data collection and analysis*
*Identifying the populations and locations at greatest risk*
*Identifying risk and protective factors*
*Developing and utilizing evidence-based strategies and programs to address the issue at every level:*
  - Individual
  - Family
  - Community
  - Society

Substance Abuse is a Public Health Issue that Requires a Public Health Response

- No silver bullet
- No magic
- No simple solution

The substance abuse problem facing our nation did not appear in one day, and will not go away overnight.

The Public Health Approach:

Create a prevention system which addresses both acute & chronic threats to health.

Prevention needs:

A workforce & infrastructure with the capacity to:
  - Deal with an emerging new trend
  - While still addressing underlying causes of all substance abuse.
Prevention is a SCIENCE!

• Today, we have the benefit of years of research.
• We have the ability and responsibility to invest our time, energy and dollars in approaches that show evidence of effectiveness.

Prevention is a science AND a discipline

Over 40 states and many territories have a prevention credentialed workforce.

These experts can help guide efforts at the local, regional, state and national levels.

Start with research-supported prevention strategies

Which hammer would you choose?

Prevention efforts must be part of a planned approach
Data driven
- Identifying local prevalence & local conditions

Science-driven
- Based in the research of what works

Part of a community’s comprehensive plan

Community level planning is key!
Coalitions are an excellent means to achieve the planned, collaborative effort needed.

Prevention is more than “EDUCATION”

We must invest in comprehensive, evidence-based prevention.
Risk & Protective Factor Framework

Domains
- Community
- Family
- School
- Peer
- Individual

Effective Prevention Is . . .
- Based in data-driven planning
- Research-based strategies
- Relevant to diverse populations & across the lifespan
- Addresses both individual & environmental factors
- Evaluated & accountable
- Comprehensive, with multiple strategies for multiple targets, populations & systems
- Community empowering & fosters ownership of problems AND their solutions
- Committed to the long-term
- Replicable (therefore documented)

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Additional Resources
Prevention Saves Lives & Money

Prevention Tactics
Substance Abuse Prevention: Benefits Outweigh Costs
http://www.cars.org/publications/Prevention%20Tactics/PT09.07.11.pdf

Health Policy Institute of Ohio
Guide to Evidence-based Prevention

A Return on the Prevention Investment:
Money Spent Upfront Can Save Costs Down the Line

Drug Free Action Alliance
Trainings:

- Prevention Works! But what works in Prevention?
- Environmental Prevention Strategies: C.A.M.P.
- Making a Case for Coalitions
March’s Prevention Webinar:

Environmental Prevention is Sustainable Prevention

- Date: March 18, 2015
- Time: 1:00-2:00 p.m. EDT
- Cost: FREE!!!
- Register by clicking on “Calendar” on our homepage at DrugFreeActionAlliance.org