

What prevention is: A two-part approach

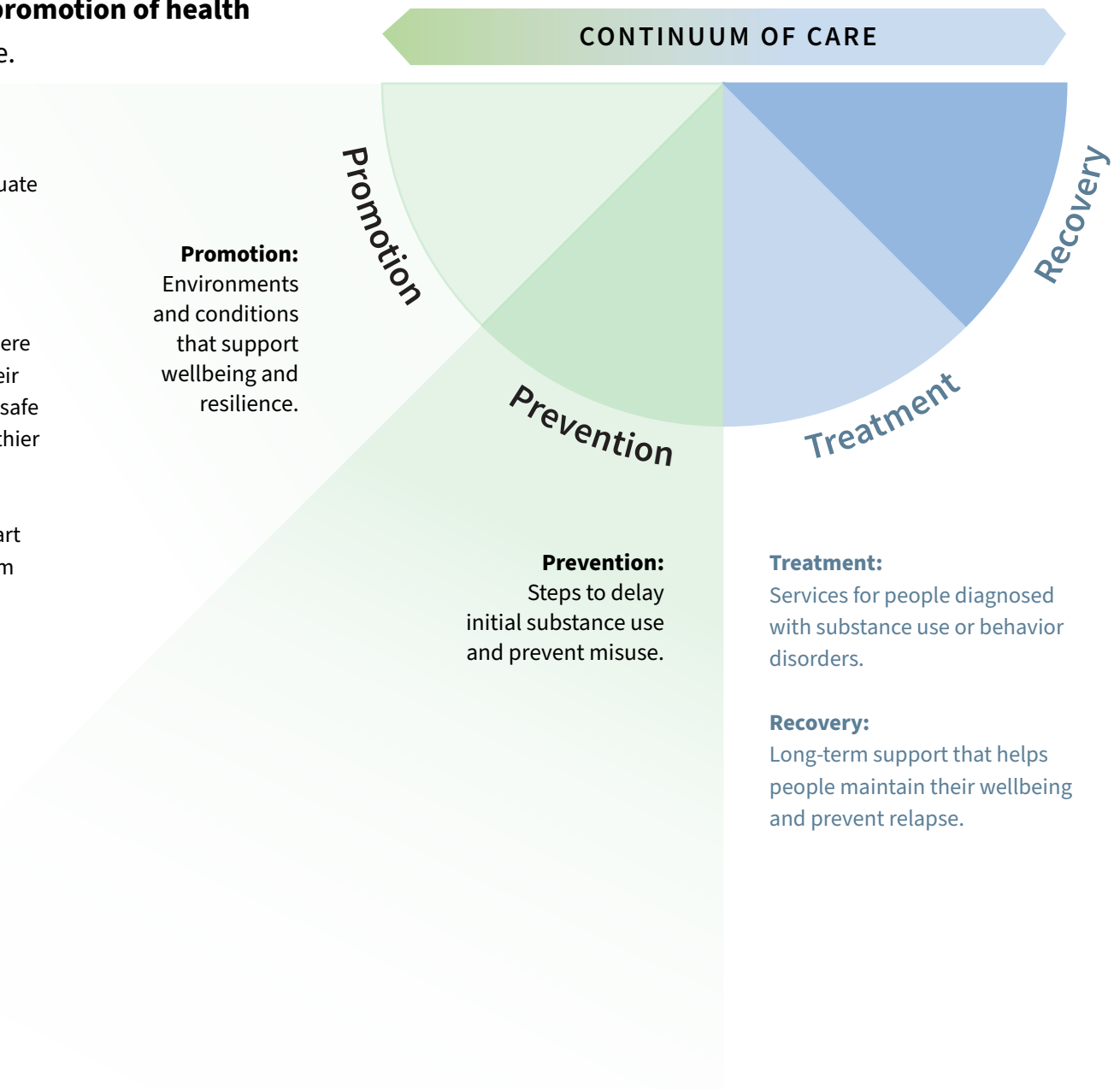
When we say “prevention,” we mean the **prevention of substance use disorder (SUD)** AND the **promotion of health and wellbeing** for people across the state.

Preventing substance use disorders is not only about addressing risk factors—like family instability, inadequate resources, or risky behavior. It’s also about improving protective factors—like strong family bonds, access to services, and a sense of connectedness.

When we do both, we create thriving communities where children and young people feel safe and healthy in their bodies, minds, and surroundings. And when they feel safe and healthy, they’re able to navigate life in safer, healthier ways.

With proven practices, community programs, and smart policies, prevention gets to the root cause of a problem before it becomes a crisis. Families, schools, communities, and policymakers all play a role in preventing substance use disorders and promoting healthy behaviors. We share a responsibility to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and resilience to thrive.

We call that responsibility **prevention.**



Who does prevention: A stream we all pour into

No single person or organization can achieve the aims of prevention work alone. **Effectively preventing substance use disorders and promoting health and wellbeing require us to work together.**

Imagine prevention as a wide, flowing stream. Like any waterway, it's fed by many small but vital sources. First, parents and caregivers, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and neighbors all contribute. Healthy early headwaters can reduce stress, build resilience, and carve a path for long-term mental and emotional wellbeing in young people.

Later, more prevention tributaries pour in. During and after school, teachers, coaches, counselors, and student assistance professionals play a role. Elsewhere, trusted role models, mentors, and peers do their part. Cultural groups and other community organizations all feed into the stream.

Larger systems like educational service districts, local health jurisdictions, community coalitions, and state and federal policymakers also shape and strengthen the prevention stream. They plan, allocate resources, and create programs that ensure prevention waterways steadily carry generations of young people toward healthy, stable futures.

Families & individuals

- Parents
- Caregivers
- Siblings
- Extended family
- Neighbors
- Peers
- Elders
- Older adults

Schools & after-school programs

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Coaches
- Mentors
- Counselors
- Nurses
- Student assistance professionals
- Other school staff

Community & culture

- Prevention coalitions
- Civic/volunteer groups
- Community-based organizations
- Cultural groups
- Faith groups
- Youth-serving organizations
- Tribal organizations & groups
- Health care professionals
- Law enforcement
- Businesses
- Substance use disorder organizations

Systems & institutions

- State and local agencies
- Federal agencies
- Tribal agencies
- State and local policymakers
- Social service providers
- Media



Why prevention matters: A protective path

Prevention is a path we all walk starting in early childhood and winding through adolescence into young adulthood.

At every stage, prevention can be there to smooth and light the way forward.

Prevention is collective. We walk the path together.

No one makes the journey alone. Prevention works best when families, schools, communities, policymakers, and systems clear the path and provide support along the way.

Prevention is community-based. Prevention shapes the person *and* the path.

The path isn't just about individual choices. It's about the world people walk through. Prevention creates safer schools, healthier families and neighborhoods, and more equitable systems. When we create a supportive environment, young people can stay on track.

Prevention is culturally relevant. Everyone's path is different.

Culture, language, and identity help shape people's norms, attitudes, and behaviors. Prevention, therefore, must reflect the lives, values, traditions, and voices of the communities it serves.

Prevention is rooted in connection. Relationships guide the way.

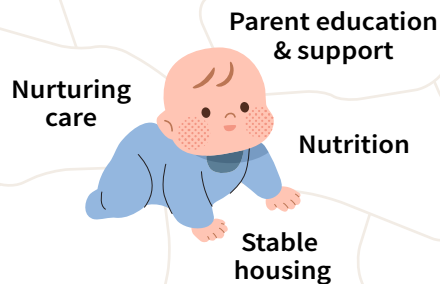
Preventing substance use disorder is about more than just saying, "No." While abstinence may be part of the picture, prevention is also about helping young people feel connected, capable, and confident in their ability to make safe and healthy choices. It's about giving them the tools to handle life's challenges and surrounding them with people who care. Because every healthy relationship in a person's life is a beacon lighting the way.

Prevention saves money. It's a smart investment in infrastructure we all need.

Paving a path—whether literal or figurative—is an investment in necessary infrastructure. When a path is smooth and the way is clear, it prevents hazards and accidents. Prevention reduces the need for costly care like crisis response, justice involvement, or long-term treatment. It improves outcomes over a lifetime, so as people reach adulthood, they too can play a part in someone else's prevention journey.

Prevention in:

INFANCY & TODDLERHOOD



Why it matters

- Fosters healthy brain development
- Improves emotional regulation
- Promotes appropriate coping skills
- Supports secure attachments
- Reduces stress and trauma from challenging situations

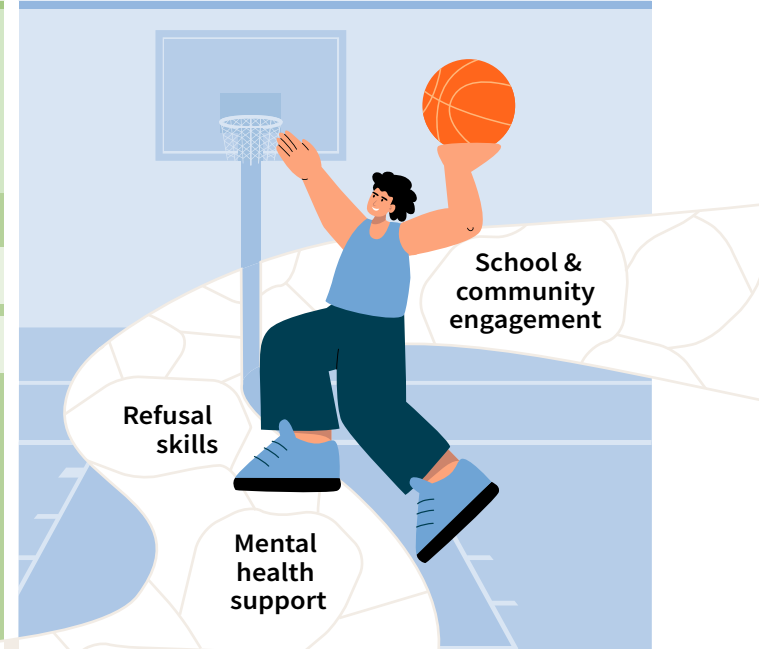
CHILDHOOD



Why it matters

- Builds confidence
- Improves decision-making abilities
- Reinforces healthy boundaries
- Reduces risk of behavioral issues or early experimentation
- Provides healthy connections
- Offers a sense of self and belonging

ADOLESCENCE & YOUNG ADULthood



Why it matters

- Delays onset of substance use
- Increases resilience to stress and peer pressure
- Supports mental health and life transitions
- Strengthens connection to school, work, and community
- Builds healthy independence