

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Press Contact

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The 10th Annual National Prevention Week Increases Substance Use Prevention and Promotes Mental Health

SPRINGFIELD, IL April 15 2021 National Prevention Week, a national health observance, will be taking place May 9-15, 2021. The week is dedicated to increasing public awareness of and action around substance use disorders and mental health. Supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Prevention Week includes daily themes that focus on major mental health and substance use topics:

Monday, May 10 - Preventing Prescription Drug and Opioid Misuse

Tuesday, May 11 - Preventing Underage Drinking and Alcohol Misuse

Wednesday, May 12 - Preventing Illicit Drug Use and Youth Marijuana Use

Thursday, May 13 - Preventing Youth Tobacco Use (E-Cigarettes and Vaping)

Friday, May 14 - Preventing Suicide

National Prevention Week echoes a key message of the U.S. Surgeon General's National Prevention Strategy. It emphasizes that prevention should weave into all aspects of our lives—including where and how we live, learn, work, and play—and that everyone has a role in creating a healthier nation.

“By promoting healthy behaviors and preventing drug and alcohol misuse, we reduce the risk of substance use disorder,” commented Karel Homrig, Executive Director of Prevention First. “National Prevention Week provides an opportunity for schools and communities to host events that raise awareness about these important issues among students and families.”

Alcohol remains the most common and abused drug among youth in the United States, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Based on the [*2018 Illinois Youth Survey results](#), alcohol is the most widely used drug among Illinois youth, followed by marijuana. While about one out of four Illinois 8th graders report using alcohol in the past year, by the time they reach 12th grade, over half report alcohol use in the past year. Similarly, reported marijuana use jumped from eight percent to 35 percent from 8th graders to 12th graders.

National Prevention Week addresses substance use prevention without neglecting mental health. Research shows a considerable connection between the two, and highlights that substance use can affect the well-being of youth. According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), underage drinking is associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, and suicidal behavior. The 2018 Illinois Youth Survey revealed that at least one out of ten 10th and 12th graders reported seriously considering suicide within the past year.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has heightened concerns around youth substance use and mental health. Prevention efforts remain crucial during these unprecedented time, and National Prevention Week offers an excellent opportunity to further these efforts and protect the well-being of our young people.

Families, communities, and organizations can join the nationwide effort to prevent substance misuse and promote mental health in a variety of ways:

- Host a community event or activity. Learn more about hosting an event [here](#).
- [Join the Prevention Challenge](#), an interactive social media activity that ties your local prevention efforts to the larger movement of National Prevention Week.
- Use the National Prevention Week [Planning Toolkit](#) to help host a successful event that connects your community's efforts to the national observance.
- Parents and caregivers can engage in the [‘Talk. They Hear You.’](#) campaign to start talking to their children about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs.

For more substance use prevention resources, visit prevention.org/substance-use-prevention-resource-center.

If you or a loved one is struggling with substance use, connect with the Illinois Helpline by calling 833-234-6343, texting “HELP” to 833234, or visiting their page at helplineil.org.

About Prevention First

Prevention First advances efforts to promote healthy behaviors and prevent substance misuse in every community through a variety of evidence-based and collaborative approaches, including training, support, and public awareness.

We are the leading organization for knowledge-building and the dissemination of evidence-based prevention strategies and believe that evidence-based approaches are the most effective paths to building communities and proactively support health and well-being.

All of Prevention First's resource centers, including the Alcohol Policy Resource Center, Youth Prevention Resource Center, and prevention campaign assets can be found at Prevention.org.