May x, 2024

 **\_\_\_\_(local agency)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_highlights the importance of substance use prevention and mental health promotion during National Prevention Week**

\_\_\_\_\_\_(city)\_\_\_\_\_\_– Prevention is a vital part of behavioral health, creating an environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities, which in-turn prevents problems before they occur. The important work of prevention happens every day. National Prevention Week is an opportunity celebrate these year-round initiatives and the possibilities prevention brings. This year’s National Prevention Week tagline, “A Celebration of Possibility,” is about communities coming together to celebrate the possibilities and brighter futures that exist thanks to the ongoing work of prevention happening across the country.

In recent years, there have been heightened concerns around substance use and mental health. The percentage of North Dakota high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year increased from 12.4% (2009) to 18.6% (2021) (YRBS). Overdose deaths in the state have increased from 76 in 2019 to 135 in 2022, and then decreased to 113 in 2023 (NDVRS, ND Health and Human Services, Health Statistics and Performance April 9, 2024). Also, North Dakota ranks third in the nation for binge alcohol use (past month) among adults aged 26 and older (NSDUH, 2021-2022), and 38% of fatal crashes are alcohol-related (ND DOT Crash Report, 2022). [REPLACE WITH LOCAL DATA IF AVAILABLE] Prevention efforts remain crucial, and National Prevention Week offers an excellent opportunity to further these efforts and protect the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

With the continued need for focus on prevention, it is important to note that prevention works, and statewide and local efforts have seen positive outcomes. In the last 20 years, current alcohol use among ND high school students has been cut in half (from 59.2% in 2001 to 23.7% 2021; ND YRBS). Also, the percentage of ND high school students reporting current cigarette use dropped from 34.8% in 1995 to 5.9% in 2021 (ND YRBS). Implementing effective prevention not only saves lives, but is also cost-effective, saving up to $64 dollars for every dollar invested (Washington State Institute for Public Policy Benefit-Cost Results, 2016).

By raising awareness, fostering collaboration, and promoting evidence-based prevention strategies, National Prevention Week contributes to reduced stigma, increased awareness, empowered communities, and improved access to resources.

[AGENCY QUOTE]

National Prevention Week campaign efforts are happening statewide, in partnership with the ND Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Division. [HIGHLIGHT ANY ADDITIONAL LOCAL EVENTS/EFFORTS]

Most adults in North Dakota believe prevention works (66.8%) and is a good investment. (68.3%) (ND Community Readiness Survey, 2021). To learn more about how to get involved, visit hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health.

Parents and caregivers can find conversation starters and other resources to support the behavioral health of their child(ren) at www.parentslead.org, or connect with Parents Lead on Facebook and Instagram.

Additional prevention resources are available year around on the division’s website at <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/prevention>

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available 24/7. Call or Text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org.