



Become a Partner IN PREVENTION!

Prevention is a vital part of the behavioral health continuum of care, creating an environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities, which prevents problems before they occur. The important work of prevention happens every day. Substance Use Prevention Month is an opportunity to celebrate these year-round initiatives and the possibilities prevention brings. May the month of October be used as a catalyst for communities to come together to celebrate the ongoing work of prevention happening across the country.

In recent years, there have been heightened concerns around substance use. Overdose deaths in the state have increased from 43 in 2014 to 131 in 2021 (CDC). Also, North Dakota ranks third in the nation for binge alcohol use (past month) among adults aged 26 and older (NSDUH), and 39% of fatal crashes are alcohol-related (ND DOT Crash Report, 2020). Prevention efforts remain crucial, and Substance Use Prevention Month 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 19.5% 2023; ND YRBS). The percentage of ND high school students reporting currently smoked cigarettes or used electronic vapor products is 19% in 2023 (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).

To help make substance use prevention month more effective, try these things:

Use the month of October to start more effective, long-term prevention programs and policies as identified in your planning process. Research and data should guide your efforts.

- + Focus on the environment. Have students identify areas of their environment where changes can be made and have them offer solutions for change. Make it easy for them to get involved in the process.
- + Promote the work you are currently doing and ask for additional support. It will take collaboration and partnerships to change outcomes.
- + Promote healthy lifestyles and positive behaviors using data where applicable. Often times, there are misperceptions around substance misuse and support for prevention. It is important when communicating, you dispel these misperceptions especially with youth.
- + Don't limit prevention to just one month out of the year. Making an impact on behaviors and norms takes time and ongoing implementation.

Most adults in North Dakota believe prevention works (66.8%) and is a good investment. (68.3%) (ND Community Readiness Survey, 2021).