

# National Prevention Strategy

## PREVENTING DRUG ABUSE and EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL USE



Preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use improves quality of life, academic performance, workplace productivity, and military preparedness; reduces crime and criminal justice expenses; reduces motor vehicle crashes and fatalities; and lowers health care costs for acute and chronic conditions.

Excessive alcohol use includes binge drinking (i.e., five or more drinks during a single occasion for men, four or more drinks during a single occasion for women), underage drinking, drinking while pregnant, and alcohol impaired driving. Drug abuse includes any inappropriate use of pharmaceuticals (both prescription and over-the-counter drugs) and any use of illicit drugs. Alcohol and other drug use can impede judgment and lead to harmful risk-taking behavior.

### ACTIONS: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL

- ▶ Foster development of a Nationwide community-based prevention system involving State, tribal, local and Territorial governments and partners such as schools, health and social service systems, law enforcement, faith communities, local businesses, and neighborhood organizations.
- ▶ Enhance linkages between drug prevention, substance abuse, mental health, and juvenile and criminal justice agencies to develop and disseminate effective models of prevention and care coordination.
- ▶ Educate health care professionals on proper opioid prescribing; screening, brief intervention, referral and treatment (SBIRT), and effective use of prescription drug monitoring programs.
- ▶ Educate and inform consumers about the risks and benefits of regulated products using strategies appropriate to culture, language, and literacy skills (e.g., prescription drug safety and side effects, public health alerts, general information about safe and appropriate medication use).
- ▶ Conduct ongoing, independent, and brand-specific monitoring of youth exposure to alcohol marketing to ensure compliance with advertising standards.
- ▶ Promote implementation of interoperable state prescription-drug monitoring programs.
- ▶ Develop programs consistent with Drug Enforcement Agency regulations that provide easily accessible, environmentally responsible ways to properly dispose of medications.
- ▶ Provide education, outreach, and training to address parity in employment-based group health plans and health insurance coverage for substance use disorders.
- ▶ Further investigate and heighten attention to issues related to driving under the influence of illicit and prescription drugs.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support State, tribal, local and Territorial implementation and enforcement of alcohol control policies.
2. Create environments that empower young people not to drink or use other drugs.
3. Identify alcohol and other drug abuse disorders early and provide brief intervention, referral, and treatment.
4. Reduce inappropriate access to and use of prescription drugs.

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## ACTIONS: PARTNERS CAN

### **Individuals and Families**

- ▶ Avoid binge drinking, use of illicit drugs, or the misuse of prescription medications and, as needed, seek help from a clinician for substance abuse disorders.
- ▶ Safely store and properly dispose of prescription medications and not share prescription drugs with others.
- ▶ Avoid driving if drinking alcohol or after taking any drug (illicit, prescription, or over-the-counter) that can alter the ability to operate a motor vehicle.
- ▶ Refrain from supplying underage youth with alcohol and ensure that youth cannot access alcohol in the home.

### **Community, Nonprofit, and Faith-Based Organizations**

- ▶ Support implementation and enforcement of alcohol and drug control policies.
- ▶ Educate youth and adults about the risks of drug abuse (including prescription misuse) and excessive drinking.
- ▶ Work with media outlets and retailers to reduce alcohol marketing to youth.
- ▶ Increase awareness on the proper storage and disposal of prescription medications.

### **Early Learning Centers, Schools, Colleges, and Universities**

- ▶ Adopt policies and programs to decrease the use of alcohol or other drugs on campuses.
- ▶ Implement programs for reducing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use (e.g., student assistance programs, parent networking, peer-to-peer support groups).

### **Health Care Systems, Insurers, and Clinicians**

- ▶ Identify and screen patients for excessive drinking using SBIRT, implement provider reminder systems for SBIRT (e.g., electronic medical record clinical reminders), and evaluate the effectiveness of alternative methods for providing SBIRT (e.g., by phone or via the Internet).

- ▶ Identify, track, and prevent inappropriate patterns of prescribing and use of prescription drugs and integrate prescription drug monitoring into electronic health record systems.
- ▶ Develop and adopt evidence-based guidelines for prescribing opioids in emergency departments, including restrictions on the use of long-acting or extended-release opioids for acute pain.
- ▶ Train prescribers on safe opioid prescription practices and institute accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance. For example, the use of long-acting opioids for acute pain or in opioid-naïve patients could be minimized.

### **Businesses and Employers**

- ▶ Implement policies that facilitate the provision of SBIRT or offer alcohol and substance abuse counseling through employee assistance programs.
- ▶ Include substance use disorder benefits in health coverage and encourage employees to use these services as needed.
- ▶ Implement training programs for owners, managers, and staff that build knowledge and skills related to responsible beverage service.

### **State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Governments**

- ▶ Maintain and enforce the minimum legal drinking age (e.g., increasing the frequency of retailer compliance checks), limit alcohol outlet density, and prohibit the sale of alcohol to intoxicated persons.
- ▶ Require installation of ignition interlocks in the vehicles of those convicted of alcohol-impaired driving.
- ▶ Implement or strengthen prescription-drug monitoring programs.
- ▶ Facilitate controlled-drug disposal programs, including policies allowing pharmacies to accept unwanted drugs.
- ▶ Implement strategies to prevent transmission of HIV, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases associated with drug use.

 Find more information at:

*Website:*

[www.surgeongeneral.gov/nationalpreventionstrategy](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/nationalpreventionstrategy)

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Healthy & Safe  
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Elimination  
of Health  
Disparities

