

CHECK THESE OUT...



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Information and resources regarding the SAMHSA-supported annual health observance dedicated to increasing public awareness of, and action around, substance abuse and mental health issues.

<http://www.samhsa.gov/preventionweek/>

ISSUE 25

focus

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TOPIC WATCH

Each month we will feature a different topic: expanding the knowledge, resources, and peer networking in targeted areas. These target areas will include workforce development, transition, supported education, leadership, organizational development, sustainability, and others as they are identified.

National Prevention Week

National Prevention Week is a SAMHSA-supported annual health observance dedicated to increasing public awareness of, and action around, substance abuse and mental health issues. This observance is an opportunity to join with other individuals, organizations, and coalitions in your community to promote prevention efforts, educate others about behavioral health, and create and strengthen community partnerships. Prevention Week emphasizes choices that set an example of health and well-being for others and voices—whether spoken or written—that raise awareness of behavioral health issues and help create healthier and safer communities.

In the summer of 2011, the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council announced the release of the National Prevention Strategy, a comprehensive plan that intended to help increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life. The National Prevention Strategy emphasizes that prevention should be woven 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. The National Prevention Strategy became the precursor to National Prevention Week, aiming to guide the nation in the most effective and achievable means for improving health and well-being.

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National Prevention Week 2013 will take place **May 12-18, 2013**. This year's theme is: *"Your voice. Your choice. Make a difference."*

The National Prevention Strategy's vision is a collaborative approach to improve the health and quality of life for individuals, families, and communities by moving the nation from a focus on sickness and disease to one based on prevention and wellness. It is founded upon some basic wellness principles.

- **Healthy and Safe Community Environments** that create, sustain, and recognize communities that promote health and wellness through prevention.
- **Clinical and Community Preventive Services** that will insure that prevention-focused health care and community prevention efforts are available, integrated, and mutually reinforcing.
- **Empowered People** that have the information and opportunity to make healthy choices.
- **Elimination of Health Disparities** to ensure the quality of life for all Americans.

Within this framework, priorities provided evidence-based recommendations that are most likely to reduce the burden of the leading causes of preventable death and major illness. The seven Priorities are

- Tobacco Free Living
- Preventing Drug Abuse and Excessive Alcohol Use
- Healthy Eating
- Active Living
- Injury and Violence Free Living
- Reproductive and Sexual Health
- Mental and Emotional Well-Being

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"
--Benjamin Franklin

The strategy specifically states that "Mental and emotional well-being is essential to overall health. Positive mental health allows people to realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life, work productively, and make meaningful contributions to their communities." (National Prevention Council, National Prevention Strategy, 2011)

Within the scope of priorities on mental health and emotional well-being four recommendations surfaced.

1. Promote positive early childhood development, including positive parenting and violence-free homes.
2. Facilitate social connectedness and community engagement across the lifespan.
3. Provide individuals and families with the support necessary to maintain positive mental well-being.
4. Promote early identification of mental health needs and access to quality services.

What Can You DO?

- Build strong, positive relationships with your family and friends.
- Become more involved in your community (e.g., mentor or tutor youth, join a faith or spiritual community).
- Encourage children and adolescents to participate in extracurricular and out-of-school activities.
- Look for activities that are mentally and emotionally comforting to you.
- Join others with a similar lived experience for support, activities, and networking.
- Work to make sure that you and those around you feel comfortable talking about problems such as mental health stigma, discrimination or bullying, and seek appropriate assistance as needed.



What Can Your Organization DO?

- Provide space and organized activities that encourage social participation and inclusion for all people, including older people, youth, and persons with disabilities who experience mental health challenges.
- Support child and youth development programs (e.g., peer mentoring programs, volunteering programs) and promote inclusion of youth with mental, emotional, and behavioral problems.
- Train key community members to identify the signs of depression and suicide and refer people to resources through programs such as Mental Health First Aid (http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/program_overview/) or E-CPR (<http://emotional-cpr.org/>).
- Expand access to mental health services and enhance linkages between mental health, substance abuse, disability, and other social services by researching community resources and supports.
- Implement changes to reduce organizational employee stress that respect mental and emotional challenges and provide reasonable accommodations.
- Provide education, outreach and training to address mental health parity in employment-based health insurance coverage and group health plans.
- Participate as an organization in community and state National Prevention Week planning and activities as a representative of mental health and emotional well-being.

Adapted from: National Prevention Council, *National Prevention Strategy*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2011. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/initiatives/prevention/strategy/report.html>

During National Prevention Week 2012, community organizations across the country hosted health fairs, block parties, educational assemblies, town hall meetings, memorial walks, social media campaigns, outdoor events, and more to raise awareness about the importance of substance abuse prevention and the promotion of mental health.

To assist in this year's activities, a National Prevention Week Toolkit will be released. The National Prevention Week Toolkit provides information to help you and others get involved in preventing substance abuse and promoting behavioral health in your community. Use this Toolkit to begin planning a National Prevention Week event that strengthens your community and educates people about the importance of substance abuse prevention and mental health. You can also use information and resources in the Toolkit - including fact sheets - to plan and carry out prevention activities year-round!

The Toolkit includes:

- Fun, easy event ideas (including ideas for school, volunteer, sporting, leisure, workplace, and policy activities);
- Planning recommendations (including information on identifying and working with partners and volunteers);
- Tips and tools for event promotion (including templates for traditional and social media outreach, and promotional items such as flyers, images, and pocket cards);
- Promotional materials for customization and printing (including stickers, flyers, and pocket cards);
- Fact sheets about the six themes of National Prevention Week;
- Budgeting tips and suggestions; and
- A glossary of behavioral health terms.



Watch for the Upcoming National Prevention Week Toolkit at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/preventionweek/toolkit.aspx>

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