

2024 Family Treatment Court Practice Academy

Navigating Risk: Disrupting the Cycle of Substance Use for Children and Adolescents

Companion Guide

Five Facts about Substance Use Prevention

- Children and adolescents affected by substance use and in the child welfare system are at **heightened risk for developing a substance use disorder (SUD)**.
- SUDs are **influenced by genetic factors** *and* are **preventable**.
- Prevention strategies should be **early, ongoing, and focused on family wellness**.
- Early drug use is one of the **strongest risk factors** for later substance use disorder development.
- **Parental influence** matters.

Five Ways to Disrupt the Cycle

- Assess for **risk and protective factors** in children and adolescents, including **familial SUD history**.
- Encourage **positive childhood experiences**. Offer, model, and assist parents in providing these experiences to children.
- Be a positive, consistent **presence in a youth's life**.
- Encourage and support parents and caregivers to have **open, honest, and ongoing conversations** with their kids about substances and substance use.
- Share this information with the parents you serve. Despite their history of substance use, parents can and should **be a powerful part of the solution** to break the cycle.



Taking Steps Toward Prevention: **Numbers | Needs | Networks**

NUMBERS • **Understand the Families in Your Community**

Understanding your data is critical to improve your practice. You cannot change what you do not count.

- Use evidence-based, age-appropriate developmental and behavioral screenings.
- Identify familial SUD, mental health history, and [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#).
- Learn how to identify and promote [Positive Childhood Experiences](#).
- Assess for [risk and protective factors](#) in children and adolescents.
- The Partnership to End Addiction's [Substance Use Risk Assessment](#) is designed to better understand the risks a child may face related to mental health, well-being, personality, family history, and their environment.



NEEDS • **Match Services to Family Needs**

Access evidence-based interventions that strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors.

- Empower parents to engage in nurturing and consistent [parenting that supports secure attachment](#).
- Educate parents on **healthy youth developmental changes** (e.g. emotion regulation, reasoning, impulse control, peer and social influence, etc.).
 - Understand youth brain development and how evidence-based interventions can prevent youth substance use.
- Encourage **open and developmentally appropriate conversations** about substance use and mental health concerns.
 - Provide [substance use prevention guidance to parents](#).
 - Refer parents and caregivers to [SAMHSA's "Talk. They Hear You." campaign](#) for conversation guidance.
 - Help youth affected by familial substance use [understand the risks](#).
- Recognize that **families and youth are the experts of their circumstances** and can provide valuable insight into the strengths and barriers they experience.
 - Understand how to [use families as a powerful resource to break the cycle](#).

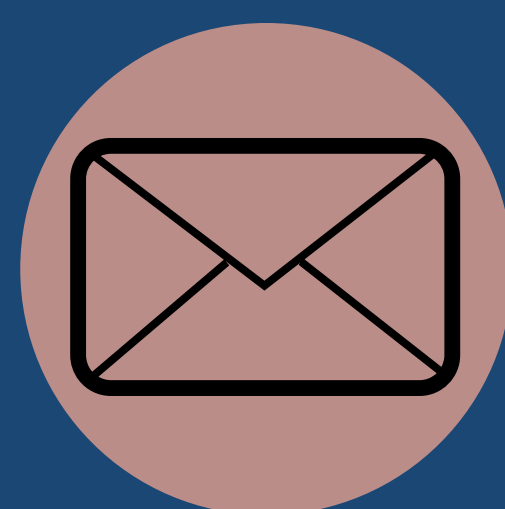
NETWORKS • Access Resources to Implement Improvements

Agency collaboration is critical. No single individual or agency can provide all the services young people and their families need to thrive.



- Rethink the scope and timing of substance use prevention. Embed prevention efforts through an [earlier and broader approach](#) to family wellness.
- Learn how [evidence-based prevention programs](#) can be effective.
- Visit [SAMHSA's Evidence-based Resource Center](#) to review evidence-based substance use prevention programs.
- Access initiatives and resources that support families at risk or affected by substance use:
 - OJJDP's [programs and initiatives](#)
 - NACOA's [resources for families in recovery](#)
 - Partnership to End Addiction's [free, personalized resources](#)
- For more information about the extent and effects of substance use among youth in foster care, ways to identify substance use, how to support youth in care who currently use or are at high risk for using substances, and strategies for prevention, review the Child Welfare Information Gateway's [Preventing, Identifying, and Treating Substance Use Among Youth in Foster Care](#).

Contact us with questions and technical assistance requests!



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