

# Science of Prevention for Professionals

*The Truth About Marijuana:  
Our Students. Our  
Community. Our Response.*

*Prevention Science  
The Essentials*

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# *Prevention Science*

## *The Essentials*

### Workshop description:

- Prevention is the process of creating population-level change to improve overall health through **decreasing risks, building on local strengths, and addressing norms and perceptions.**

### Goal:

- Explore the science of creating change around substance abuse issues and describe essentials at work in communities to help you align your professional practices with prevention principles.

# Ready, set, go!

- In about an hour, let's see how many elements of prevention we can connect explore.
- Terms
- Research
- Theories
- Strategies
- Principles

# Prevention is population-level change

- Focus is on the community population to increase health and reduce risk factors overall.
- Forces us to look at an assortment of factors, across related systems which influence substance use.
- Implies implementing the foundation of the public health approach to creating solutions.

# Population-level change IS Public Health

- Focus on promoting healthy living and preventing problems
- As population versus individually based
- Examines factors that influence risk and protection
- Involves multiple contexts, including cultural
- Consider the developmental stage of life
- Utilizes an intentional, dynamic planning process
- Is ongoing

# Prevention Foundations

## Risk factors and Protective factors

- Individual
- Peer
- Family
- School
- Community
- Society

# Prevention Foundations

## **Risk factors:**

Characteristic at the

Biological

Psychological

Family

Community or

Cultural level

that *precedes* and is *associated* with a  
**higher** likelihood of problem outcomes.

# Prevention Foundations

## **Protective factors:**

Characteristic at the

Individual

Family

Community or

Cultural level

that is *associated* with a **lower** likelihood of  
problem outcomes.



# Prevention Foundations

## Risk factors and Protective factors

- substance abuse
- delinquency
- Violence
- unwanted teen pregnancy
- depression and anxiety
- school dropout
  - [WA Risk Factors list](#)

# Risk factors for youth marijuana use

Prevention programs targeting significant early developmental stage factors have the potential to reduce use and frequent use of marijuana

- Poor family management
- Parental attitudes favorable to drug use
- Academic failure

Many peer and individual risk/protective factors are important, but some are more malleable than others

- Perceived risks of drug use
- Favorable attitudes towards drug use

In the community domain, focus on significant risk/protective factors

- Perceived availability of drugs
- Laws and norms favorable to drug use (for younger age group – 6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grades)

Source: Washington State Department of Social & Health Services • Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, L. Becker, 2013

# Protective Factors

(community, family, school, peer)

## Individual characteristics

- Resilient temperament
- Positive social orientation

## Bonding

- Opportunities
- Skills
- Recognition

Healthy beliefs and clear standards

# Risk and Protective Factors

- Research based
- Predictive
- Cumulative
- Changeable – not fixed

These correlations underscore the importance of

- Early intervention
- Interventions that target multiple, not single, factors

The ideal is a balance of risk and protective factors in a community.

# Strategic Prevention Framework



# Assets and Local Strengths

- Data
- Description of the community demographics
- Description of the issues and needs
- Catalog of local resources, gifts, talents, local strengths, stories, and assets
- Gaps

# Community Capacity

- Increasing Resources
  - Human
  - Organizational
  - Fiscal
- Improving Readiness to **accept** that a youth marijuana use problems needs to change and to take **action** to change the problem.
- The importance of engaging stakeholders, formal and informal leaders.

# Identifying Readiness of the Community for Change

Is the community...

- Unaware or have no knowledge of the problem?
  - Is there tolerance for the problem?
  - Is it just a select few of us who know?
- In denial that there is a violence problem in the community?
- Verbalizing concern to “do something?”
- Involved in planning?
  - Are groups and resources dedicated to the problem?
- Collecting and sharing data?
- Conducting evaluation of program outcomes?
- Involved in awareness activities, trainings, town halls, other community prevention activities?



# Resources and Stage of Readiness

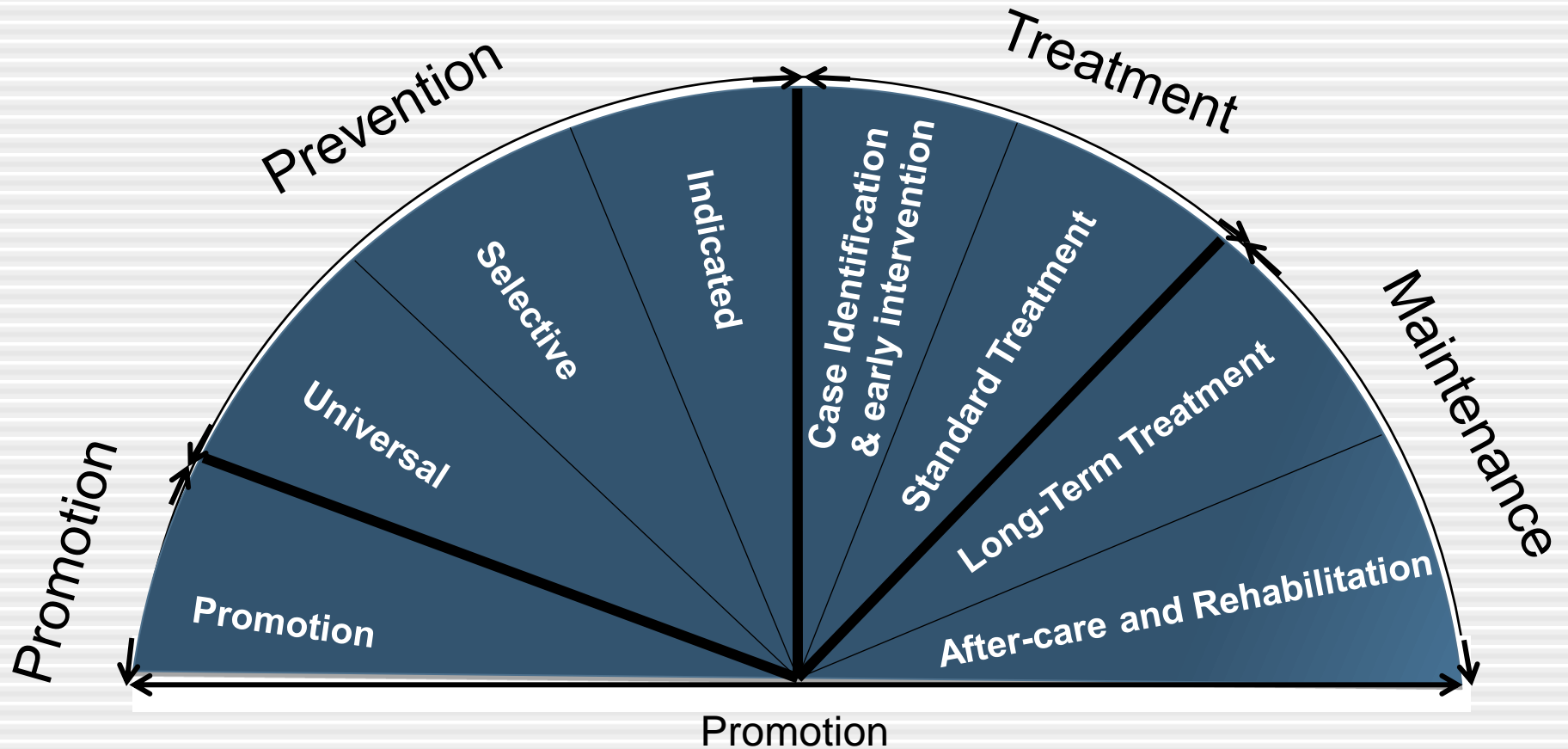
- High resources, high readiness
- High resource, low readiness
- Low resources, high readiness
- Low resources, low readiness

Assess and identify your foundational starting point for encouraging change.

# Planning for implementation and change

- Increase community awareness
- Expand partnerships
- Introduce the strategies to stakeholders
- Provide training
- Identify levels of **importance** of each risk and protective factor
- Assess the **changeability** of each

# Continuum of Care



# Universal Preventive Interventions

- Broadest approach
- Focus on general public or a whole population
- Schools, whole communities, workplaces

## Examples:

Laws that increase penalties for providing marijuana to minors

Prevention programs for all middle school students in a school district

# Selective Preventive Interventions

- Populations whose risk of developing disorders is significantly higher than average
- Focus on biological, psychological or social risk factors that are more prominent among higher risk groups than among the wider population

Examples: prevention education for new immigrant families living with young children in a poverty situation

Children of a parent with a substance use disorder

# Indicated Preventive Interventions

- High-risk individuals who are identified as having beginning signs of developing a unhealthy behavior or disorder
- Focus on immediate risk and protective factors present in the environments surrounding the individuals.

Examples:

Referral for youth smoking an e-cig

Program for 21-25 year olds arrested for driving while under the influence of mj

# Norms and Perceptions

- The role of perceptions in prevention
  - Influence action and inaction
  - Inflate and minimize the scope of the problem
  - Provide narrative data
  - Offer explanation of why this is our local problem right here and what needs to shift
- Norms as practices, patterns, and standards of social behavior
- Norms can be codified into laws & ordinances



## Coalitions Pursuing Comprehensive Strategies

**1. Provide information**

**2. Build skills**

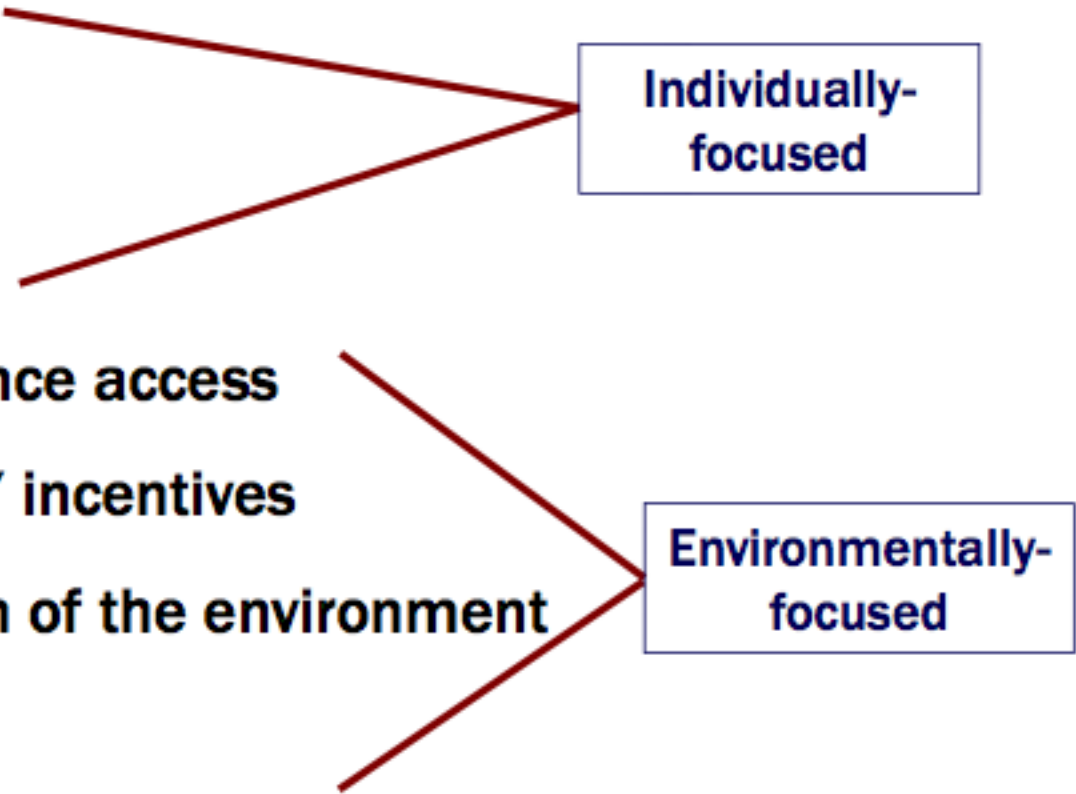
**3. Provide social support**

**4. Reduce barriers / enhance access**

**5. Change consequences / incentives**

**6. Alter the physical design of the environment**

**7. Change policy and rules**



**Individually-  
focused**

**Environmentally-  
focused**



# Environmental Prevention Strategies

- Seek to create change in the shared environment in which individual children grow and learn
- Are efficient - they affect every member of the target environment
- Produce rapid results
- Enhance other prevention efforts in the community
- Change the culture and contexts within which decisions about youth issues and substance use are made, and thus
- Reduce the prevalence of related negative consequences

# Prevention Principles

- Address risk and protective factors
- Emphasize cultural strengths and adaptations
- Focus on program delivery for successful implementation
- Retain core elements
- Train staff
- Use clear and consistent messages and norms
- Build bonding
- Be sensitive to age appropriate interventions
- Implement at multiple settings
- Consider norms and perceptions
- Plan comprehensively and long term
- Incorporate evaluation measures
- Work collaboratively

# Prevention Resources

- WASAVP
- PSCBW
- WA Association of Prevention Coalitions
- Liz Wilhelm  
liz.Wilhelm@seattlechildrens.org
- Prevention Works In Seattle, Seattle Children's Hospital, King County YMPEP, Seattle Central College, & UW