



# Youth & Young Adult Prevention

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## Opioid and prescription drug misuse among Colorado's youth remains an ongoing problem, making prevention among these groups essential to fighting the opioid crisis and overdose epidemic.

The statistics for Colorado are striking. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found in its 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health that 18- to 25-year olds in Colorado reported the highest rate of prescription pain reliever misuse. According to a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation, in Colorado 173 people between the ages of 25 and 34 died of opioid-related overdoses in 2017, more than any other age group. The same survey found 57 deaths among people under the age of 24.

For many people who develop substance use disorders, the problem begins during adolescence. The nonprofit Center on Addiction found that more than 90 percent of people with addictions first used substances before the age of 18.

Prevention is an important component of Colorado's anti-opioid crisis strategy. Agencies, organizations, and community coalitions have developed many initiatives focused on youth. These groups share the view that prescription drug misuse prevention must begin among youth and young adults and in the context of comprehensive substance abuse prevention efforts; programs should include appropriate and inappropriate use of prescription drugs, the science of the teenage brain, and written and unwritten community standards, codes, and attitudes that affect the prevalence of substance use norms in the general population.

In this chapter, you will find information about prevention, links to resources, and information about Colorado initiatives intended to promote prevention. Use this chapter if you are:

- Interested in prevention strategies and their underlying concepts, especially as they apply to youth;
- Interested in Colorado efforts to deter youth from substance and opioid misuse; and/or
- Looking for resources from national and state experts.

## About Prevention

Primary prevention is an “upstream” approach that addresses problems before they occur. According to the Prevention Institute, “a primary prevention approach requires looking at the role that the social, physical, economic, and cultural environments play in contributing to behavioral health problems and how those environments can be changed to prevent some behavioral health problems from occurring in the first place.” Advances in prevention research have shown that characteristics of individuals, their families, and their environments (such as communities, neighborhoods and schools) affect the likelihood that individuals will engage in risky behaviors such as substance use. Other characteristics serve to protect or provide a buffer to moderate the influence of the negative characteristics. These characteristics are identified as risk and protective factors.

Prevention approaches often focus on increasing protective factors, such as school and family connectedness, and decreasing risk factors, such as easy access to substances and favorable parental attitudes towards the problem behavior. More information on risk and protective factors as they relate to prescription drug misuse can be found in SAMHSA’s *Preventing Prescription Drug Misuse: Overview of Factors and Strategies*, online at [www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/SAMHSA-preventing-prescription-drug-misuse.pdf](http://www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/SAMHSA-preventing-prescription-drug-misuse.pdf).

In addition to primary prevention, secondary and tertiary prevention are further along in an individual’s drug addiction. These prevention efforts are more likely to be needed later in life, though some youth and transition-aged youth might benefit from these services.

See the chart in this chapter for more information about primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.



Information on risk and protective factors as they relate to prescription drug misuse can be found in SAMHSA’s “Preventing Prescription Drug Misuse: Overview of Factors and Strategies”, online at [www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/SAMHSA-preventing-prescription-drug-misuse.pdf](http://www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/SAMHSA-preventing-prescription-drug-misuse.pdf)

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention		
Category	Definition	Example
<b>Primary</b>	Intervening before health effects occur	Educational campaign to promote healthy behavior
<b>Secondary</b>	Screening to identify diseases in the earliest stages	Connecting someone to treatment
<b>Tertiary</b>	Managing disease post diagnosis to slow or stop disease progression	Post-treatment recovery services or relapse planning

Source: Centers for Disease Control, [www.cdc.gov/pictureofamerica/pdfs/picture\\_of\\_america\\_prevention.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/pictureofamerica/pdfs/picture_of_america_prevention.pdf)

## Youth Prevention Programs, Practices, and Policies

According to the federal government's Youth.gov website, there are many substance abuse prevention interventions with different areas of focus that can be implemented in a variety of settings. Interventions can involve the family, school, and community and may provide substance abuse prevention for an individual or a population of youth by focusing on environmental and community factors and policies, developmental factors, or skill development.



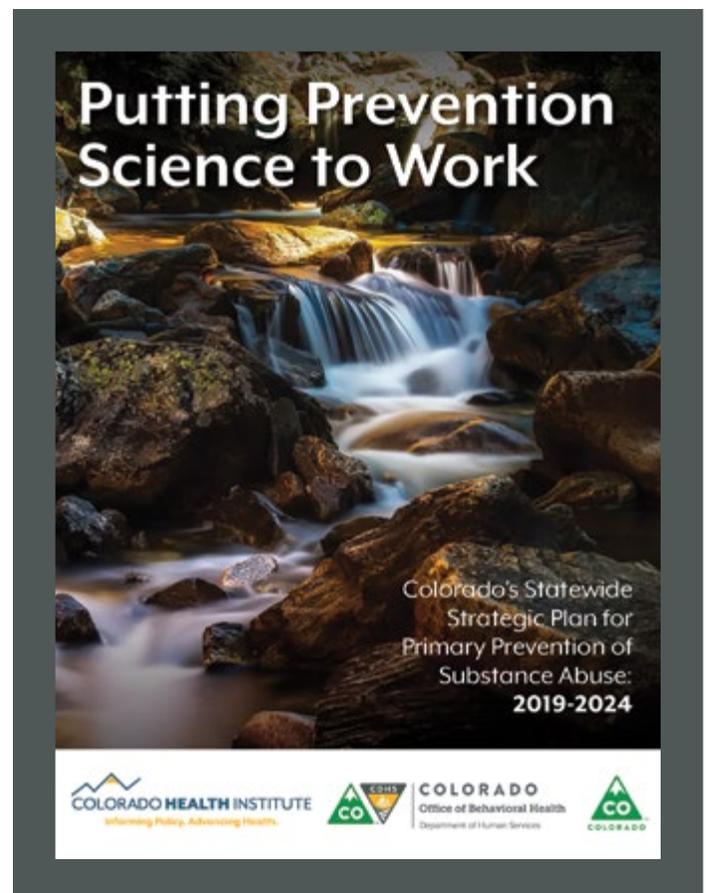
Youth-focused prevention initiatives include:

- Educational and skills training programs for young people in school settings;
- Programs that teach parents effective ways to monitor and communicate with their children and establish and enforce family rules regarding substance use;
- Community-based programs that combine these components with additional mass media or public policy components (e.g., restricting access through enforcement of minimum purchasing age requirements)

A helpful summary regarding evidence-based interventions for preventing substance misuse in youth can be found online at [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2916744](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2916744). Youth.gov also maintains a page specific to preventing and treating teen opioid use at [www.youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/opioids](http://www.youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/opioids).

## Youth and Prevention in Colorado

In Colorado, substance abuse prevention is funded by multiple entities – from the federally funded Substance Abuse Block Grant to the state-funded Communities that Care process. In 2017 and 2018, the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) and the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) undertook a comprehensive study of Colorado's primary prevention landscape and a statewide needs assessment and strategic plan, which have been summarized in two reports, and are being used to advance science-based prevention and the prevention workforce in Colorado; the reports will also inform priority setting for state





substance abuse primary prevention programs. You can view the reports here at [www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/Research/Snaps](http://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/Research/Snaps) and [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/article/statewide-strategic-plan-primary-prevention-substance-use](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/article/statewide-strategic-plan-primary-prevention-substance-use).

*Putting Prevention Science to Work: Colorado's Strategic Plan for Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse* emphasizes two broad goals: (1) implementing evidence-based programs and strategies; and (2) addressing upstream risk factors that predict substance and other behavioral health problems, and the protective factors that mitigate these bad outcomes. OBH has posted the report online at [drive.google.com/file/d/1mjLh0-fQXFA71-nr4xZD9bgUv9lpwFnR/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mjLh0-fQXFA71-nr4xZD9bgUv9lpwFnR/view).

The OBH Community Prevention and Early Intervention Program works with key policymakers, prevention providers, various state level organizations, families, individuals and communities to promote and strengthen the substance abuse primary prevention infrastructure throughout the state. You can learn more about OBH and the programs they fund at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/substance-use-prevention-early-intervention](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/substance-use-prevention-early-intervention).

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Communities that Care initiative (online at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/ctc](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/ctc)) funds several coalition initiatives across the state that are working to align community efforts related to youth substance abuse prevention.

Strengthening Families in Colorado is an example of a collaborative project that focuses on prescription drug misuse. The Colorado State University Extension Program, Peer Assistance Services, Rise Above Colorado, and the Consortium are collaborating on the Strengthening Families in Colorado initiative throughout rural Colorado. Through this initiative, community partners will be trained to deliver evidence-based programs shown to improve outcomes related to substance use. The program selected for this project is the Strengthening Families Program 10-14 (SFP 10-14). Broad campaign messaging emphasizing prescription opioid misuse prevention will be provided within the community to reinforce and complement the SFP 10-14 "Love and Limits" concepts. The CSU Extension Program's web page is [www.extension.colostate.edu](http://www.extension.colostate.edu). The Strengthening Families Program 10-14 website is [www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp10-14](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp10-14).

## Resources

Youth prevention requires a comprehensive approach to meet youth in their homes, schools, and broader communities. Some resources available in Colorado at these various levels of the social ecological model include the following:

### Campaigns

#### SpeakNow

OBH's SpeakNow campaign encourages parents and caregivers to initiate conversations about substance use with the young people in their lives. More information on SpeakNow is in the Public Awareness chapter. SpeakNow is online at [www.speaknowcolorado.org](http://www.speaknowcolorado.org). Resources are also available in Spanish at [www.hableahoracolorado.org](http://www.hableahoracolorado.org).

#### Responsibility Grows Here



The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Responsibility Grows Here campaign informs the public about responsible marijuana use and the effect of marijuana on youth. Its website is [www.responsibilitygrowshere.com](http://www.responsibilitygrowshere.com).

#### #iRiseAbove

The #iRiseAbove campaign aims to promote positive social norms related to youth substance use, showcasing

the fact that most youth haven't misused substances including alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs. Its goal is to reduce the misperception between perceived peer use and self-reported use, an approach which has been proven to reduce substance use over time. The campaign is disseminated statewide through social and digital media. Community organizations can participate through local activities designed to engage youth in the conversation and implementation. Visit [www.riseaboveco.org](http://www.riseaboveco.org) for more information.

### Approaches and Frameworks

#### Positive Youth Development

This approach focuses on helping youth acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become healthy and productive adults. You can learn more about the approach at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/positive-youth-development](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/positive-youth-development).

#### Strategic Prevention Framework

The Strategic Prevention Framework was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to provide an inclusive and participatory model that emphasizes the role of the community in prevention. Information about the SPF is online at [ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/strategic-prevention-framework/main](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/strategic-prevention-framework/main).

#### Risk and Protective Factors

A detailed discussion of risk and protective factors is available online at [ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/choose-and-adapt-community-interventions/risk-and-protective-factors/main](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/choose-and-adapt-community-interventions/risk-and-protective-factors/main).

#### Guide to Evidence-Based Strategies

This CDC resource summarizes 10 opioid overdose prevention strategies for public health, law enforcement, local organizations, and others striving to serve their community. It is online at [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/pubs/2018-evidence-based-strategies.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/pubs/2018-evidence-based-strategies.pdf).

## Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) Network

The Prevention Technology Transfer Center was created and is funded by SAMHSA to improve implementation and delivery of effective substance abuse prevention interventions, and provide training and technical assistance services to the substance abuse prevention field. Its website is [pttcnetwork.org](http://pttcnetwork.org).

## Programs

### Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development

This program helps you easily identify evidence-based programs that help young people reach their full potential. It is online at [www.blueprintsprograms.org](http://www.blueprintsprograms.org).

### Prescription Drug-specific Programs

#### EverFi's Prescription Drug Safety

This program is a self-directed digital course that provides high school students with the knowledge and tools to make healthy, informed decisions when it comes to prescription medications. Students learn about a range of topics, including the science of addiction, how to properly use and dispose of prescription drugs, and how to intervene when faced with a situation involving drug misuse. This resource is made available for free in Colorado through a grant from the Walmart Foundation. The website is [everfi.com/offerings/listing/prescription-drug-safety](http://everfi.com/offerings/listing/prescription-drug-safety).

#### Not Prescribed

Rise Above Colorado's Not Prescribed is a free, one-hour facilitated classroom-based lesson empowering teens with the science and the stories to understand the risks of misusing prescription drugs and the skills to rise above. This science- and standards-based lesson includes information on the appropriate and inappropriate uses of prescription drugs, the science of the teen brain and its susceptibility to addiction, peer refusal skills, and Colorado-based resources to seek help and advocate for themselves and others. The lesson is available for use at [www.notprescribed.org](http://www.notprescribed.org).

## Surveys

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) is conducted to better understand youth health and what factors support youth to make healthy choices. More information on HKCS is in the Data chapter. The survey's website is [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/hkcs](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/hkcs).

The Rise Above Colorado Youth Survey is a data source for behavioral health and substance use attitudes and behaviors among Colorado teens ages 12 through 17. The 2018 data of more than 600 youth is based on a representative sample of the entire state. Data from this survey can be accessed by visiting [www.riseaboveco.org](http://www.riseaboveco.org).

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System is a survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control that monitors six categories of health-related behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults, including drug use. It can be found online at [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm).

## The Consortium and Youth Substance Abuse Prevention

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention supports many statewide and community efforts to encourage healthy choices by youth. These messages are included in some of the Consortium's public awareness campaigns. However, agencies such as OBH specialize in youth primary prevention and the Consortium encourages organizations interested in this area to reach out to them.

If you have an interest in this area or have questions about this topic, reach out to a program manager at [pm@corxconsortium.org](mailto:pm@corxconsortium.org).