



Promoting Protection Through Prevention



Advocacy and Education Toolkit

Introduction:

Welcome to the "Promoting Protection Through Prevention" toolkit, designed to empower prevention professionals and community members passionate about upstream prevention. Whether you're deeply involved in prevention work or simply looking to positively impact your community, this guide offers you straightforward, actionable tools to champion protective factors and prevent problems before they arise. With the resources provided here, you'll be equipped to enhance your advocacy, engage effectively with decision-makers, and foster meaningful improvements in your community's health and well-being.

REIMAGINING PREVENTION

REIMAGINING

A Call to Action:

We

are a community

Reimagining Prevention

calling for change to amplify investment in early prevention and protective factors for our youth.

Because

early prevention stops substance use before it starts, building resilience with protective factors like family and community bonds.

We know

investing in prevention today creates healthier communities tomorrow.

We can

start by uniting our resources, experience, and partnerships to spark real change.

Make a difference

by joining us to protect and empower our youth.

Share your story

inspire change and strengthen our collective voice.

**PA
Start**

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Announcement

October is Prevention Month (Youth Substance Use Prevention and Substance Misuse Prevention Month). This is a critical time to highlight the importance of early prevention efforts in our communities. Prevention is powerful—it strengthens protective factors and reduces risk factors across individuals, families, schools, and communities. Decades of community-based experience and scientific research confirm that early prevention works.

Collaborating with the Cross Systems Prevention Workgroup, the Commonwealth Prevention Alliance (CPA) plans a month-long statewide advocacy campaign to coincide with Prevention Month. We invite you to be a part of this movement:

- **Prevention Month at the Capitol:** Join us on Wednesday, October 2nd, for a day of advocacy in Harrisburg. If you're interested in participating, please contact Jeff Hanley at jeff.hanley@paprevention.org.
- **Prevention Month in Your Community:** Throughout October, we encourage you to schedule a meeting with a local decision-maker. Use this toolkit, along with our leave-behinds and videos, to educate and advocate for early prevention, protective factors, and healthy communities. Your voice is essential in making a difference in your community.

Learn more about Prevention Month @ <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/observances/prevention-month>

Know It

Advocacy is about...

Empowering Communities to share how early prevention positively impacts youth.

Promoting positive change by raising awareness and building support for prevention efforts.

Sharing Evidence to highlight the benefits of investing in strengthening protective factors

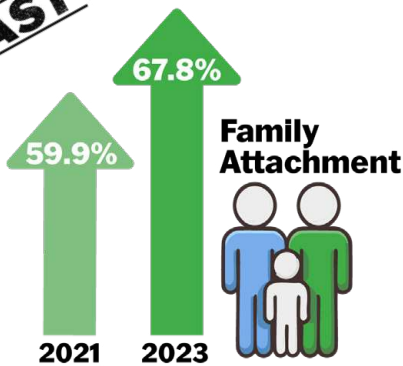
Influencing decision-makers through a combination of data-informed messages and personal stories that highlight prevention's importance.

1.1 The Power of Protective Factors

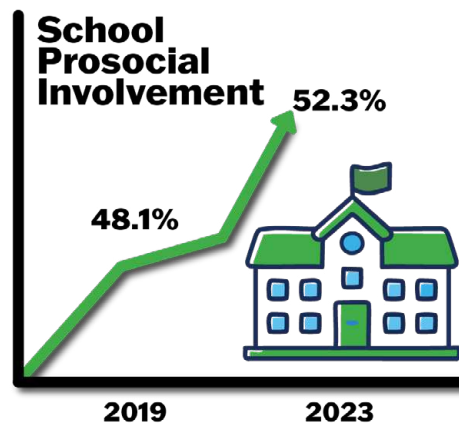
Understanding and strengthening protective factors—like strong family bonds, positive peer relationships, academic success, community involvement, and effective coping skills—are crucial in preventing substance use and promoting youth well-being. These elements serve as a buffer against substance misuse, empowering young people to resist pressures.

Recent data across Community, Family, School, Peer, and Individual domains provides valuable insights into our prevention efforts. These trends highlight both areas of improvement and opportunities for advocacy. By examining changes in these protective factors, we can better assess program impact, identify growth areas, and advocate for the support needed to sustain and enhance these critical elements.

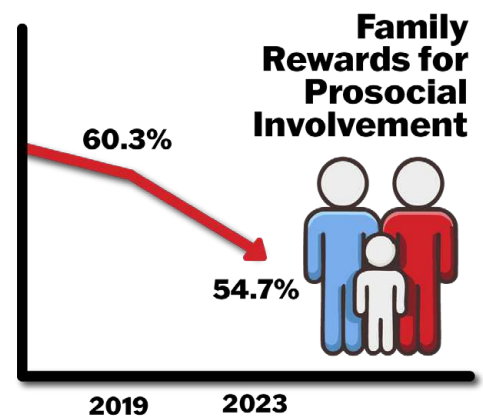
FAST FACTS



Reflects successful family-focused programs and supports advocacy for continued or increased funding.



Suggests effective school recognition systems and reinforces the need for supportive policies.



The decline indicates a real need for increasing focus and resources.

Advocacy Through Reflection and Action

- **Reflect on Impact:** Identify how your programs influenced protective factors and use these as advocacy points.
- **Collaborate:** Share insights with peers and develop a unified advocacy strategy.
- **Set Goals:** Establish clear advocacy goals and adjust strategies based on reflections.
- **Leverage Success:** Use program impact to justify funding in grants and budget discussions.
- **Influence Decision-Makers:** Advocate for prevention funding by highlighting the role of protective factors in preventing substance misuse.

1.2 Advocacy vs. Lobbying: Clarifying the Path

Nonprofits have several avenues to promote early prevention and influence policy. To effectively use each approach, it's important to understand the distinctions between grassroots advocacy, lobbying, and public awareness.

Types of Advocacy

GRASSROOTS



Grassroots Advocacy

- **Goal:** Empower local communities to engage with decision-makers on issues that directly affect them.
- **Impact:** Grassroots advocacy is powerful because elected officials are inclined to listen to their constituents, whose collective voices carry significant influence.
- **Effective Strategies:**
 - ◇ **Community Engagement:** Organize town halls and other public events where community members can voice their concerns.
 - ◇ **Digital Campaigns:** Mobilize the community to contact elected officials through calls, emails, and social media.

LOBBYING



Lobbying

- **Goal:** Directly influence **specific** legislation by communicating with lawmakers.
- **Impact:** Lobbying is typically carried out by professional lobbyists who build strategic relationships with legislators to advocate for or against specific laws.
- **Important Considerations:** While nonprofits can engage in lobbying, it is regulated and must be done within legal limits. If they choose to participate, nonprofits should be aware of these regulations.

AWARENESS



Public Awareness

- **Goal:** Educate the general public on key issues to build widespread understanding and support.
- **Impact:** Raising public awareness creates a knowledgeable community that can later be mobilized for advocacy efforts.
- **Effective Strategies:**
 - ◇ **Educational Campaigns:** Use webinars, briefings, and expert panels to inform the public.
 - ◇ **Media Outreach:** Share research, impact stories, and data through social media, newsletters, and other digital platforms.
 - ◇ **Advertising:** Utilize billboards, flyers, and other public displays to spread important messages.

Focus on Policy, Not Legislation

When advocating for prevention efforts, remember this toolkit promotes policy advocacy, not support or opposition for specific legislation. The goal is to influence broader policy changes that strengthen community well-being and prevention programs.

Choosing the Right Path

- **Grassroots Advocacy:** Ideal for empowering communities to directly engage with decision-makers on local issues.
- **Lobbying:** A more formal approach, typically used by organizations with the capacity to navigate legal restrictions and engage directly with lawmakers.
- **Public Awareness:** Best for educating the public and laying the groundwork for future advocacy.

Putting Advocacy into Action

- **Start with Public Awareness:** Educate the community on prevention issues to build a base of informed supporters.
- **Mobilize Grassroots Efforts:** Encourage community members to take action through organized events and digital campaigns.
- **Understand Lobbying:** If lobbying is part of your strategy, ensure it is conducted within legal guidelines and complements broader advocacy efforts.

Source: [Agent of Change Advocacy Guide, MENTOR](#).

1.3 Can a Nonprofit Be a Powerful Advocate?

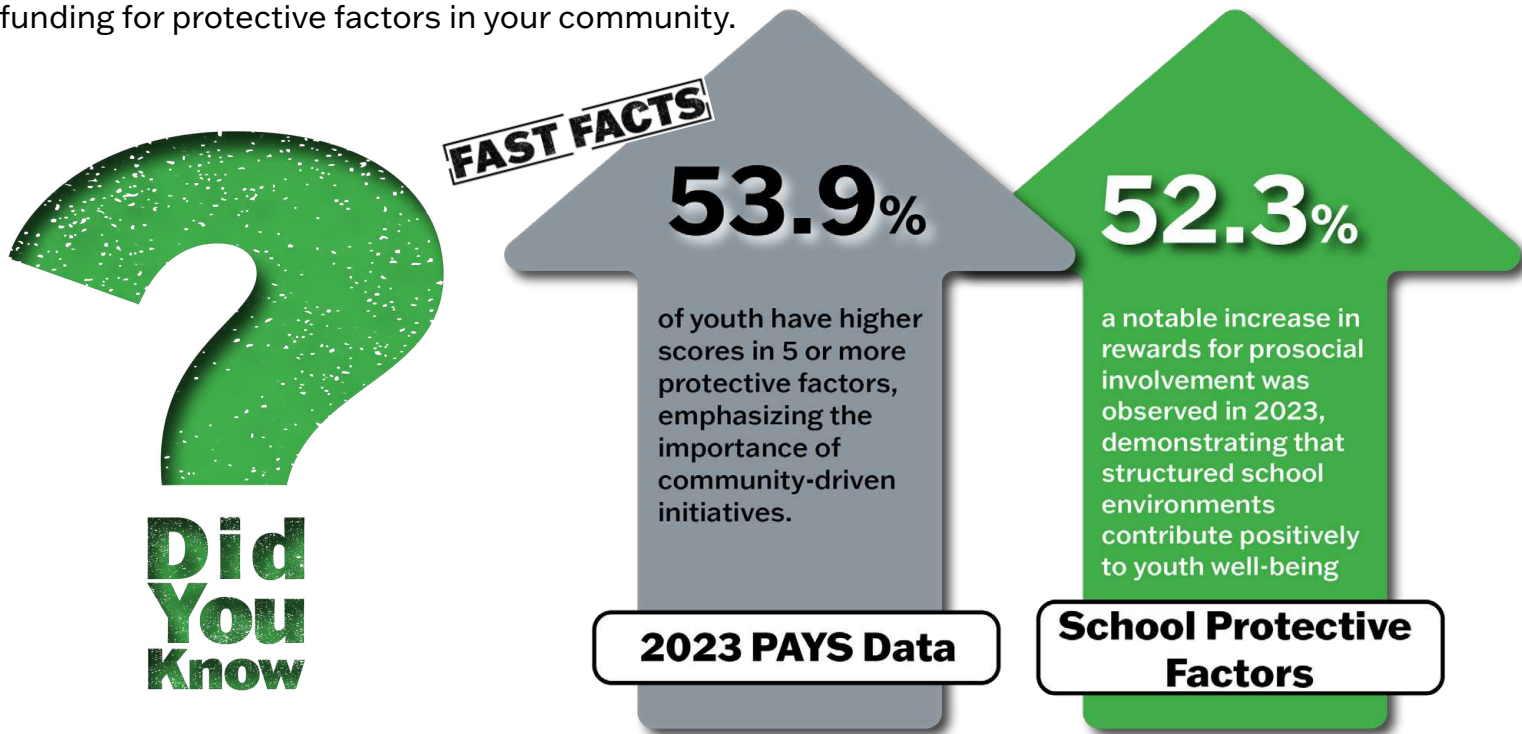
Absolutely! Nonprofits have a powerful role in driving change through **grassroots advocacy** and **public awareness**. By taking action to educate the public and mobilize communities, nonprofits can significantly influence policies and create lasting impact. Grassroots advocacy empowers local communities to speak up, while public awareness campaigns spread the message and inspire collective action.

Remember, nonprofits can also engage in lobbying, but it's important to know the legal guidelines. To make the most of your advocacy efforts, check out [Let's Get Straight: Advocacy vs. Lobbying by the National Council of Nonprofits](#).

Shape It

2.1 Mastering Your Advocacy Message

When speaking to decision-makers, combine data with personal stories to create a strong advocacy message. Highlight how these elements can influence decision-makers to support funding for protective factors in your community.



2.2 Essential Talking Points for Influencing Decision Makers



What are Protective Factors? Explain the importance of protective factors in preventing substance use and supporting community health.

"Protective factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk and help individuals deal more effectively with stressful events. These factors play a critical role in preventing substance use and promoting overall well-being."



Impact on the Community: Share local data and personal stories that highlight the positive effects of protective factors in your community.

"In our community, recent data from the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) shows that youth who report strong family attachment are significantly less likely to engage in substance use. Specifically, in 2023, 67.8% of our youth reported high family attachment, correlating with a reduction in substance use rates."



Call to Action: Encourage decision-makers to support funding and policies that promote protective factors in their jurisdictions.

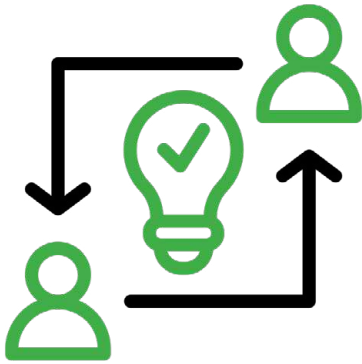
"We need your support in securing funding for programs that strengthen protective factors in our community. Investing in family engagement programs, school-based initiatives, and community activities will ensure that our youth have the support in all areas of their lives they need to thrive."

2.3 Building Connections Through Opportunities, Skills, and Recognition

Crafting impactful advocacy messages isn't just about what you say—it's about how you connect with your audience on a personal level. The Social Development Strategy (SDS) is a proven-effective model that promotes positive youth development through all stages of childhood and adolescence. By applying the principles of SDS, you can create messages that resonate deeply and inspire action.

Understanding the Social Development Strategy

The SDS uses the following principles to increase bonding and commitment among youth:



Offer young people chances to participate, succeed, and feel valued.



Equip them with the necessary skills to take advantage of those opportunities.



Acknowledge and celebrate their achievements and efforts.

These elements foster attachment, commitment, and the development of healthy beliefs and clear standards, which are crucial in both youth development and advocacy.

Creating Your Own SDS Story

To craft a message that truly resonates, start by reflecting on your own experiences:

- **Opportunities:** Think back to a time when a caring adult provided you with opportunities to succeed. How did that shape your growth?
- **Skills:** Consider the skills they taught you. How did these skills empower you to take on challenges?
- **Recognition:** Recall how they provided recognition for your efforts. What impact did that have on your confidence and motivation?
- **Healthy Standards:** Reflect on the healthy behavior standards they set for you. How did these standards guide your decisions?
- **Bonding:** Finally, think about how strongly you were bonded with this individual. How did this bond influence your commitment to positive behaviors?

Applying SDS in Your Advocacy

After watching the Social Development Strategy Video, take these reflections and craft your advocacy message by integrating the principles of SDS. Share your story with decision-makers to illustrate the power of opportunities, skills, and recognition in fostering positive youth outcomes. By doing so, you can create a message that is not only impactful but also deeply personal and relatable.

Do It

3.1 Building Strong Connections with Decision Makers

Building strong connections with decision-makers is essential for effective advocacy. Here's a practical guide to various actions you can take, along with their potential impact:



Taking Action: Low, Medium and High Lift Strategies

- **Low Lift:** Send an email to your legislator with key data points and a personal story about the impact of protective factors.
- **Medium Lift:** Attend a town hall meeting and ask your legislator about their stance on funding for substance use prevention.
- **High Lift:** Organize a community event to raise awareness about protective factors and invite local legislators to participate.

Adapted from CADCA's Advocacy Toolkit

Fast Advocacy : Make a Big Impact in Little Time

1 Day...

Host a community discussion featuring the "River Story" and "My Prevention Story" videos, using PAYS data to inform and inspire action on strengthening protective factors.

1 Minute...

Amplify messages that promote early prevention by liking, commenting, and/or sharing social media posts

1 Hour...

Create a presentation with PAYS data showcasing your prevention efforts to share with community organizations.

10 Minutes...

Watch the Social Development Strategy Video and then create your own SDS story - see Section 2.3 for more info!



15 Minutes...

Schedule a meeting with a legislator or their staff to discuss the importance of early prevention, the related protective factors, and the impact of your programs.

These actions are designed to help you build and maintain strong connections with decision-makers, ensuring that your advocacy efforts are impactful and sustained over time.

3.2 Perfecting Your Follow-Up: Email Templates

Effective follow-up is key to maintaining the momentum of your advocacy efforts. Below are some email templates to help you perfect your follow-up after meetings or events:

- Thank You Email Template: Express gratitude for the meeting and restate your key points.
- Follow-Up Action Email Template: Provide a summary of agreed-upon next steps and offer additional resources.

Sample Follow-Up Email :

Subject: Thank You for Your Time and Continued Support

Dear (Decision-Maker),

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us and discuss the critical importance of protective factors in our community. We truly appreciate your interest in [specific issue discussed] and your ongoing support for our prevention efforts.

As we covered in our conversation, [insert key points discussed]. Should you require any additional information or have further questions, please feel free to reach out. We are more than happy to provide any details you might need.

For additional insights, we invite you to visit <https://pastart.org/mypreventionstory/>, where you can find videos from prevention professionals that illustrate what effective prevention looks like in our community. For example, you will find a video that illustrates early prevention in a way that you may have never seen before. Check it out [here!](#)

Thank you again for your commitment to strengthening our community's well-being.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Organization]

[Your Contact Info]

3.3 Amplify Your Voice: Social Media Engagement Ideas

Social media is a powerful tool for advocacy. Here are some ideas to help you amplify your voice and reach a broader audience:

- Use the Campaign Hashtags: When posting on any platform, use these #PreventionWorks #MyPreventionStory #ProtectiveFactorsinPA.
- Share Success Stories: Highlight successful prevention initiatives on social media to inspire others.
- Tag Commonwealth Prevention Alliance: When you share your advocacy efforts on social media, tag Commonwealth Prevention Alliance! This helps create a stronger community around prevention efforts and allows us to amplify your message further. Use (@CommonwealthPreventionAlliance) and include the campaign hashtags.

Sample Social Media Post

Proud to advocate for protective factors that support our community's youth. Recently discussed the importance of early prevention with (Legislator's Name). Share your prevention efforts with us using #PreventionWorks #MyPreventionStory #ProtectiveFactorsinPA



Empower our youth through protective factors! From family support to positive activities, every effort counts. How are you contributing? #PreventionWorks #MyPreventionStory #ProtectiveFactorsinPA



Every action counts! Let's strengthen our community by building protective factors that empower our youth. How are you making a difference? #PreventionWorks #MyPreventionStory #ProtectiveFactorsinPA



Stronger youth, brighter future! It starts with us—promote protective factors like positive peer connections and strong family bonds. Share how you're supporting our youth! #PreventionWorks #MyPreventionStory #ProtectiveFactorsinPA



Prevention begins with protective factors. Help our youth thrive by fostering environments that keep them safe and strong. Let's hear your prevention stories! #PreventionWorks #MyPreventionStory #ProtectiveFactorsinPA



Together, we can create a safety net for our youth. Focus on building protective factors today—because prevention starts early. What steps are you taking? #PreventionWorks #MyPreventionStory #ProtectiveFactorsinPA



Support It

4.1 Advocacy Tools

- ✓ Fact Sheet
- ✓ Legislator Thank You Letter
- ✓ Social Media Posts (templates)
- ✓ Early Prevention document

4.2 Data & Evidence

- PAYS Highlight Report

FAST FACTS

Key Takeaways:

2023 PAYS Data underscores the crucial role of protective factors in youth development. Use this data to inform your advocacy efforts and support your message with recent, relevant statistics.

4.3 Connect with Essential Resources

- [Understanding Protective Factors SAMSHA](#)
- [Social Development Strategy Video](#)
- [PAYS highlight report](#)
- [Prevention Learning Portal](#)
- [What Works in Prevention](#)
- [Upstream Prevention Video](#)

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