**SAMHSA’s National Prevention Week: May 12 through 18, 2024**

Each year as summer draws near, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) promotes National Prevention Week (NPW). But what is prevention and why is it important? Prevention is the creation of an environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities, which prevents problems before they occur. National Prevention Week brings together communities and organization across the United States and celebrates prevention efforts and raises awareness about the importance of substance use prevention and positive mental health.

The important work of prevention happens every day. National Prevention Week is an opportunity celebrate these year-round initiatives and the possibilities prevention brings. This year’s National Prevention Week tagline, “A Celebration of Possibility,” is about communities coming together to celebrate the possibilities and brighter futures that exist thanks to the ongoing work of prevention happening across the country.

Substance misuse and mental health are public health issues impacting North Dakota families, communities, and businesses.

* The percentage of North Dakota high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide remains high at 18.6% (YRBS, 2021).
* Overdose deaths in the state have increased from 76 in 2019 to 135 in 2022, and then decreased to 113 in 2023 (NDVRS, ND Health and Human Services, Health Statistics and Performance April 9, 2024)
* North Dakota ranks third in the nation for binge alcohol use (past month) among adults aged 26 and older (NSDUH, 2021-2022)
* 38% of fatal crashes are alcohol-related (ND DOT Crash Report, 2022)

Through effective, evidenced-based prevention strategies, we can continue to better the health and wellbeing of all North Dakotans. Not only does prevention save lives, but is also cost-effective, saving up to $64 dollars for every dollar invested (Washington State Institute for Public Policy Benefit-Cost Results, 2016).  Effective prevention looks like:

* Law enforcement implementing alcohol and tobacco compliance checks to enforce the laws related to youth access to substances.
* Taking medication as prescribed and safely disposing of any unused or unwanted medication.
* Parents and other adults engaging with the children in their life and role-modeling healthy behaviors.
* Policymakers having conversations about policy changes that can help support healthy communities.
* Community coalitions being active in community efforts and promoting healthy and safe messages and activities.

All North Dakotans can participate in National Prevention Week! To learn more about how to get involved and find free resources, visit [hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/npw](https://www.hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/npw).

To learn about all of the prevention efforts happening in North Dakota, visit  [hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/prevention](https://www.hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/prevention).