

Overview of Coalition-Based Prevention

Throughout the country, community coalitions make a significant difference. Local coalitions continue to change the way that American communities respond to the threats of illegal drugs, alcohol misuse and tobacco use. By mobilizing the entire community—parents, teachers, youth, police, health care providers, faith communities, business and civic leaders and others—communities can transform themselves. Coalitions are defined as a formal arrangement for collaboration among groups or sectors of a community, in which each group retains its identity but all agree to work together toward the common goal of a safe, healthy and drug-free community.

No single entity bears the sole responsibility for preventing youth drug use and misuse; rather a comprehensive blend of individually and environmentally focused efforts must be adopted and multiple strategies must be implemented across multiple sectors of a community to address this issue. Generalized universal prevention programs to help build strong families and provide youth with the skills to make good, healthy decisions are necessary. However, there is also a need to focus specifically on environmental strategies which include changing social norms and reducing access and availability through systems and policy changes.

In order to achieve population level reductions in drug use, a multi sector, and community based drug prevention infrastructure must be organized to strategically plan, implement and evaluate community wide comprehensive strategies as well as evidence-based drug prevention programs throughout multiple community sectors and settings. These strategies, programs and services are developed and delivered by the community as a whole and include multiple community partners, such as parents, youth, schools, youth serving organizations, healthcare providers, and other relevant community departments, sectors and participants.