

# Section 3: Prevention



## Objectives

1. To understand the intended audience for prevention efforts at different levels.
2. To be familiar with the CSAP substance abuse prevention strategies, and to be able to give examples of how SACOs can use these strategies in their prevention duties.
3. To be familiar with other prevention activities on base, including prevention planning.
4. To be able to explain why prevention planning is important.
5. To understand how to conduct needs assessments and create prevention

## Levels of Prevention

Most of your duties as SACO in some way involve attempting to prevent high-risk alcohol use and substance abuse. This section will provide you with background concepts about different approaches to preventing substance abuse. Substance abuse prevention efforts can be classified based on the target population. That is, who are you trying to reach with the prevention efforts? There are three levels: universal, selective and indicated.

**Universal** – Universal prevention efforts are general. They typically focus on an entire population, regardless of level of risk for substance abuse problems. A SACO's unit prevention training fits into this category. The SACO provides universal training to the entire unit. The content of the training is applicable to the whole group of Marines.

**Selective** – Selective prevention efforts focus on a subgroup whose risk of alcohol misuse or substance abuse problems is higher than average. For example, training that is targeted to 18 to 25 year olds is considered selective prevention because individuals in this age group are at higher risk for substance-related problems than older groups. Selective prevention efforts are usually given by the SACC, and their content often focuses on risks that are specifically relevant to the high-risk target group. However, the SACO may also give selective prevention training to higher-risk subgroups in the unit. An example would be Marines under the age of 21 or a subgroup of Marines in the unit who recently returned from a deployment.

**Indicated** - Indicated prevention efforts are provided to individuals who have shown signs of a problem. SACOs typically will not be directly involved in indicated prevention. Instead, indicated prevention is typically provided by SACC staff or other health care professionals. As discussed in the Response chapter, if a Marine was involved in an alcohol-related incident, he or she will often be referred to indicated prevention, in the form of the PRIME for Life (PFL) course. The PFL course is a means of education and prevention of further substance abuse problems.

Having a basic understanding of the levels of prevention is helpful for you to see how your prevention efforts relate to other substance abuse prevention activities on your base.

## Prevention Strategies

Regardless of the intended audience, there are different prevention strategies that can be used. The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) has identified six general substance abuse prevention strategies; these are shown in Table 3-1. Each of these strategies is described in more detail on the pages that follow. The substance abuse prevention team can use all six of the CSAP prevention strategies in their efforts to prevent alcohol misuse and substance abuse.

### **Strategy 1: Information Dissemination**

Any effective substance abuse prevention plan must include some type of information dissemination. Information dissemination is one-way communication that provides knowledge, messages and facts related to substance abuse. This includes posting pamphlets, posters, and policies on bulletin boards around the installation. Materials can also be disseminated through an informational booth at events such as health fairs. Newsletters, event announcements, relevant articles, and policy notices can be sent by email or posted on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter.

### **Strategy 2: Education**

Education is a critical element in substance abuse prevention. Education is interactive, making it unique from information dissemination. This means that a lecture on substance use, with no interaction between the presenter and the stu-

dents, would NOT be considered education. However, if there were a discussion session after the lecture, this would be considered education. In general, research suggests that the more interactive education efforts are, the more likely they are to be successful. For this reason, discussions or other interactive activities may be more effective in preventing substance abuse than lectures.

Education may also occur in more informal contexts, when a person knowledgeable about substance abuse discusses relevant issues with others in the course of everyday life. Strategies for planning and providing substance abuse education are discussed in greater depth in the Education chapter of this manual.

### **Strategy 3: Alternatives**

Another strategy for reducing alcohol and substance problems is to provide alternatives. Examples are abundant in programs like the Single Marine Program, where events are held that exclude alcohol use. Participating in athletic events and attending command functions where alcohol is not served also fall into this category.

This prevention strategy should involve identifying local events or activities that do not include alcohol. Make sure Marines are aware of them, and encourage them to participate. This includes connecting Marines with relevant organizations within Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), as well as informing them about events in the community. If there are not many local recreational options that don't involve drinking, consider working with other members of the substance abuse prevention team to create more of them. Effective use of this strategy requires that:

- Alternatives are available and appealing.
- Unit members are aware of alternatives and able to access them.

### **Strategy 4: Problem Identification and Referral**

Problem identification involves identifying those who are at risk of engaging in risky or illegal substance use behavior but have not yet begun use. In other cases, it occurs after high-risk behavior has begun, but before a substance abuse problem has developed. For example, problem identification can involve catching individuals who are exposed to or experimenting with substances in risky or illegal ways. The two keys to using this strategy are:

1. Identifying individuals at risk of developing substance problems **before** problems develop.

2. Preventing the development of problems by referring these individuals for prevention education.

## **Strategy 5: Community-Based Processes**

Community-based processes involve making connections between those interested in the same issues so they can work together to maximize the positive impact of prevention efforts. This type of team building and resource sharing was discussed in [Section 1: Introduction](#), p. 1-17. The sharing of ideas, resources and plans with other members of the community can significantly strengthen prevention efforts, increase success, and reduce workload by avoiding duplication of efforts.

## **Strategy 6: Environmental Strategies**

Environmental strategies involve making changes to the environment in order to reduce substance use. There are several types of environmental strategies that may decrease alcohol misuse or substance abuse.

### **Changing availability**

Anything that makes it harder to get substances on base or in the surrounding community can reduce the likelihood of alcohol misuse or substance abuse. This can involve reducing the local availability of alcohol, increasing ID checks to prevent underage drinking, increasing the cost of alcohol, or limiting the areas Marines are allowed to go in the community.

### **Changing consequences**

Increasing the penalties associated with alcohol misuse or use of prohibited substances is another type of environmental change that may prevent the development of substance abuse problems.

### **Changing perceptions**

Other environmental strategies don't involve actually changing the situation in terms of the availability of substances or the consequences of misusing them. These strategies rely on changing perceptions rather than actually changing the environment. For example, a campaign could be conducted to make the negative consequences of substance misuse more salient, or to frame heavy alcohol use as a sign of weakness rather than strength.

Table 3-1 CSAP Prevention Strategies.

<b>CSAP Strategies</b>	
Information Dissemination	One-way communication of informational resources relevant to substance abuse.
Education	Interactive trainings and education as well as more informal communication about substance abuse.
Alternatives	Providing activities that do not include or are incompatible with substance use.
Problem Identification and Referral	Early identification of people with potential substance problems to allow for educational intervention.
Community-Based Processes	Working together with other individuals and groups with similar goals to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of prevention efforts.
Environmental Strategies	Changing the environment in ways that will reduce substance abuse.

Department of Health and Human Services, 45 CFR Part 96 (part XI), Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants, Interim Final Rule, Federal Register, Volume 58, Number 60, March 31, 1993.

# Using CSAP Strategies in CO Prevention Duties

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The CSAP strategies can be used to accomplish different prevention-related tasks that are part of your job as SACO. This section considers how the CSAP strategies apply to your prevention duties. An effective substance abuse prevention program will incorporate each of the CSAP strategies.

## **Leading By Example**

The Introduction section of this manual highlighted the importance of the SACO setting an example for unit members by being drug-free and not engaging in high-risk alcohol use. You also should avoid speaking or acting in ways that suggest that it's acceptable or "normal" for Marines to engage in high-risk alcohol use. Although not under your control, it is desirable that other people in leadership positions within your command set an example by not acting in ways that support high-risk drinking.

When you lead by example, you are using an **environmental** strategy. Your actions can help reduce risky alcohol use by changing the environment for Marines in your unit. When leaders model low-risk alcohol use and do not approve of alcohol misuse, Marines get the message that high-risk alcohol use will not be condoned or tolerated. Similarly, through your words and deeds you should promote the idea that not drinking is an acceptable choice.

You and other leaders also can serve as role models when it comes to looking out for your fellow Marines and helping them to avoid high-risk alcohol use, or to avoid negative outcomes if they do drink too much.

## **Promoting Strong Policies**

Your command's substance use policy will be a deterrent if it:

1. Specifies adverse consequences for alcohol misuse and substance abuse, and
2. Is consistently applied

This is another **environmental** strategy. Marines in your unit will be less likely to engage in risky substance use if they think the command takes these issues



seriously. If your command does not have a policy on alcohol (or has only a weak policy), talk to your CO about developing or strengthening the policy. In addition to specifying consequences of alcohol misuse, orders may prohibit activities that promote high-risk alcohol use, such as drinking games. You also should encourage your CO to have a specific policy about the consequences of prohibited substance abuse. These policies can help shape the environment, preventing high-risk drinking and use of prohibited substances.

## **Effective Random Drug Testing Program**

Maintaining an effective random drug testing program is an important prevention-related duty. This is another **environmental** strategy.

Recall that environmental strategies include procedures, policies, and even cultural factors that discourage substance misuse. Random drug testing is a policy with a primary purpose of deterring drug use. There is evidence that a well-run urinalysis program (i.e., those in which testing is perceived to be both frequent and unpredictable) is an effective deterrent. Marines should feel like anyone who uses drugs is likely to get caught. Recently enacted breathalyzer testing may serve a similar deterrent function with respect to heavy drinking.

Although not its primary purpose, random drug testing also identifies Marines who are engaging in illegal drug use, facilitating their referral for treatment and processing for administrative separation.

## **Informing Marines**

One of your prevention-related duties as SACO is to disseminate information to unit members about substance abuse, related issues, and available resources. This duty relies primarily on the CSAP strategy of **information dissemination**. Information can be spread through a variety of media, including brochures, posters, media reports, Marine Corps Orders, cartoons, email messages, PowerPoint presentations, verbal announcements delivered at meetings, TV or radio announcements.

Think big and be creative!

The content of information to be disseminated can range widely, including information about:

- Specific illegal drugs
- Misuse of prescription drugs

- Drug testing
- Alcohol and drug policies
- Effects of alcohol and drugs on the body
- Attitudes and norms about risky alcohol use and prohibited substance use
- Rates of drug use or alcohol problems
- Base-sponsored prevention campaigns (e.g., That Guy, Red Ribbon)
- Events sponsored by the SACC or other local events that are not alcohol-focused
- Resources for people with possible drug or alcohol problems

Think about which information is likely to be most useful and relevant for Marines in your unit when deciding what to disseminate.

## **Providing Substance Abuse Education**

Another prevention-related duty of SACOs is to ensure that regular, effective, and engaging alcohol and substance abuse education on topics relevant to unit members is provided. This prevention duty will rely primarily on the CSAP strategy of **education**. There are also times where this training will rely on **information dissemination** if it is in a pure lecture format.

Formal substance abuse education must be provided to the Marines at least annually. An active and engaged SACO will typically exceed this threshold by holding or sponsoring several educational programs over the course of a year, either alone or in collaboration with other members of the unit or installation prevention team. Working with colleagues to plan and conduct prevention education also uses the CSAP strategy of **Community-based processes**. Further information on the content and planning of education activities is provided in [Section 4: Education](#) of this manual, p. 4-1.

## Other Prevention Efforts on Base

In addition to the prevention activities that you engage in as SACO, it is important to stay informed about substance abuse prevention activities on base. These are generally planned and executed by the A&SAPS, SACC staff, and/or the DDRC.

These prevention specialists may engage in a broad range of activities designed to prevent substance abuse. As SACO, you should support these activities and assist as much as you are able. However, the focus in this section is on two specific activities that must be done annually according to MCO 5300.17:

1. Annual substance abuse prevention training and
2. Annual prevention planning.

Prevention planning is briefly described below.

### **Prevention Planning**

Conducting effective prevention efforts requires planning. There are two main steps in prevention planning. The first is to identify and prioritize target areas that prevention efforts will focus on. **Needs assessment** is a process for identifying which substance abuse issues are most in need of attention at the local level. After identifying local needs, the next step is to make a prevention plan. A **prevention plan** is a plan of action for reducing substance abuse. It targets an observed problem area and identifies steps that can be taken to reduce the problem.

The DDRC and A&SAPS at each installation will conduct annual needs assessments and prepare annual prevention plans for the installation as a whole. All SACOs should be familiar with annual substance abuse prevention plans for the installation. The SACO, along with other members of the substance abuse prevention team, may be called upon to help the DDRC and A&SAPS with installation-level needs assessments or prevention plans. Working together in this way represents the use of the CSAP prevention strategy of **community-based processes**.

#### **Needs Assessment**

The purpose of a needs assessment is to identify problem areas related to substance use. The findings of needs assessment are then used to develop a substance abuse prevention plan.

There are several different types of problems that should be considered when conducting a needs assessment:

- Are Marines using prohibited substances? If so,
  - What kind?
  - Where are they getting them?
- Are Marines engaging in high-risk alcohol use (e.g., dangerous levels of drinking, driving after drinking, getting into trouble after drinking, underage drinking)?
  - Which of these problems is most common?
  - Are particular types of alcohol usually involved?
- Are most substance use issues occurring in particular areas, at certain times, or among certain groups of people?
- What are the attitudes of unit members about illegal drug use, risky alcohol use, and intervening with fellow Marines who are engaged in substance abuse?

After the questions of interest have been identified, it is important to use as many different types of information as possible to answer them. Sources of information that can be used to identify possible substance-related problems in the unit include:

**Official records.** Drug testing records can be examined to look for patterns of positive drug screens. Similarly, police blotters can be examined for information about alcohol-related incidents involving unit members.

**Community information.** Information from the local community (e.g., local media, including newspapers, radio, and TV news) may provide information about substance use problems in the area that may affect Marines.

**Other members of the prevention team.** SACC staff may have useful information about substance issues on base or in your unit. They also may be able to alert you to substance issues in other units or in the local community.

**Unit leaders.** Unit leaders are likely to have their own perspectives on alcohol abuse and illegal drug use problems within the unit.

**Unit members.** Rank-and-file unit members may have the most accurate information about what is going on within the unit. A needs assessment could involve speaking with unit members individually, leading group discussions, or even developing a survey to administer to unit members.

After data have been gathered, prevention specialists will look at all of the data and attempt to identify patterns that provide answers to the identified questions. The goal is to get a picture of potential substance-related problems on the

installation, factors that may be contributing, and who is at greatest risk.

Needs Assessments are helpful in several distinct ways:

**Informing the CO.** Needs Assessments provide the basis for briefing the CO about local substance abuse problems and trends.

**Education.** By identifying which substance-related issues are the biggest problems locally, needs assessments can inform decisions about the focus of substance abuse education on the installation.

**Reducing Marines' Risk.** The results of the needs assessment helps to pinpoint possible emerging problems so that effective prevention efforts can be undertaken.

### Developing Prevention Plans

A prevention plan is a plan of action for reducing substance abuse. It can involve attempting to reduce factors that appear to be increasing substance abuse and/or attempting to increase factors that appear to be protective against substance abuse. The plan then identifies steps that will be taken to reduce risk factors and/or increase protective factors.

The results of needs assessments provide essential information for prioritizing which substance abuse issues are in greatest need of attention. The needs assessment helps inform the prevention plan by identifying important target areas to focus prevention efforts. A prevention plan can use all six of the CSAP strategies.

Ideally, a prevention plan will contain:

1. *Specific measurable goals* to improve the situation.
2. *Strategies or methods of accomplishing the goals* (usually a plan of action and milestones).
3. *Measurable objectives* tied to the strategies in the form of smaller goals that will be accomplished in the shorter term. For example, conducting urinalysis of 3% of your unit per week is an objective in the fulfillment of the goal of testing 10% of the unit per month.
4. *Evaluation* at predetermined time points to assess whether objectives are on target and if the plan needs to be adjusted.

**Steps to develop a prevention plan.** Suppose that a needs assessment revealed a cluster of positives for spice in a specific barracks area.

**STEP 1:** Develop one or more specific goals to improve this situation. Sample goals might include:

- (a) Increase knowledge about risks and consequences of spice use.
- (b) Increase surveillance for possible spice use within the barracks.
- (c) Increase the perception that spice users are likely to be caught and prosecuted.

**STEP 2.** Next, you would develop a set of strategies or methods for accomplishing each goal. If your goal were to increase knowledge about risks and consequences of spice use, some possible strategies could be:

- (a) Brief the entire unit on adverse effects of spice use.
- (b) Increase awareness of command policy regarding spice use.

**STEP 3.** Next, for each strategy, identify measurable objectives that will indicate progress toward achieving the goal. If the strategy is to increase awareness of command policy regarding spice use, measurable objectives might be (1) to have the CO send an email stating the consequences of spice use, and (2) hanging posters about the consequences of spice use.

**STEP 4.** Finally, the prevention plan should include an evaluation component, in which progress is assessed at key points in time (e.g., monthly). This evaluation should include whether the measurable objectives have been met (e.g., did the CO send out the email to all unit members? How many posters were posted? Did they remain up over time?).

An evaluation should go beyond looking at whether the plan was implemented to also look at whether the steps taken were effective at reducing the problem. The bottom line question for effectiveness in this example is whether the number of Marines testing positive for spice has decreased over time. However, it is often also useful to ask a few Marines about whether they noticed the steps taken and whether they were influenced by them. In this case, Marines could be asked:

- Whether their awareness of spice policy has increased recently.
- Whether they have noticed spice posters.
- Whether they received the CO's spice email.
- Whether they attended the spice briefing.

If the current prevention plan is not working as it should, this evaluation process provides an opportunity to make changes to the plan.

An example of a prevention plan is provided on the next page.

## **Sample Prevention Plan: Targeting Spice Use**

**Goal 1: Increase knowledge about risks and consequences of spice use.**

**Strategy1-1:** Brief the entire unit on adverse effects of spice use and consequences of spice use.

**Objective 1-1a.** 80% of unit members received the spice briefing within 2 weeks.

**Objective 1-1b.** 100% receive the briefing within 4 weeks.

**Strategy1-2:** Disseminate information about command policy regarding illegal drug use in general and spice use in particular.

**Objective 1-2a.** Ask the CO to send out an email reiterating the zero-tolerance policy on illegal substance use, to include spice use.

**Objective 1-2b.** Post posters about spice policy prominently in every building on the installation.

**Goal 2: Increase surveillance for possible spice use within the barracks.**

**Strategy 2-1:** Schedule frequent leader “drop-bys” in the barracks where spice use appears to be occurring.

**Objective 2-1a.** 3 leader drop-bys in the first week.

**Objective 2-1b.** 1 or 2 drop-bys each week for the following 2 weeks.

**Strategy 2-2:** Increase the frequency of drug testing within the unit.

**Objective 2-2a.** Conduct 2 unit sweeps within the next 6 months.

**Objective 2-2b.** Increase the unit drug testing; test 5% of the unit per week for the next 6 weeks.

### **Evaluation**

At the end of each month for the next 5 months, assess progress to date in executing this plan. Effective performance will be defined as meeting benchmarks listed above. Whether goals were met will be more broadly assessed by examining positive spice test results by month, and by informally asking Marines how aware they are of spice policy. If progress toward goals is not evident, adjust or revise strategies and objectives accordingly.

# What you should know about Prevention

1. What the different levels of prevention are and how they differ.
2. What the CSAP strategies are and how the SACO can use them in his or her prevention efforts.
3. What the BASIC program is and how it works.
4. Benefits of prevention planning.
5. How to conduct needs assessments and create prevention plans.