

# Substance Misuse Prevention in MTSS-B



NH's Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Behavioral Health and Wellness (MTSS-B) tiered prevention model provides an ideal framework through which to promote substance misuse prevention (SMP) in schools: universal programming for all students, targeted supports for at-risk students, and more intensive intervention and referral for students with active substance-related needs.

## Schools are an ideal setting for prevention

There is strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of programs and policies aimed at preventing the initiation of substance use during adolescence and reducing problematic use and negative consequences during young adulthood.<sup>1</sup> Schools are in a unique position to offer SMP; they have access to adolescents who may be at risk, systems to identify youth in need of help, opportunities to develop trusted adult relationships, knowledge of resources, and the ability to connect youth and families with community supports. Building upon MTSS-B as an organizational structure, schools can:

- ✓ **Increase protective factors** by providing education and awareness about substances, forming healthy relationships, navigating peer pressure, and help-seeking.
- ✓ **Identify risk factors associated with substance misuse** (e.g., internalizing behaviors, family history of substance misuse, academic failure, availability of substances) through screening.
- ✓ **Mitigate risk** by connecting identified youth to appropriate services and supports.

## How to integrate substance misuse prevention in MTSS-B

### Include SMP expertise in district and school MTSS-B teams

Add staff with SMP expertise (Licensed Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselors, community-based substance misuse organizations/coalitions, etc.) to MTSS-B District-Community Leadership and school-based teams to enhance SMP knowledge and ensure that SMP is integrated into policy (e.g., wellness, discipline) and program development.

### Use substance-related data to inform decision-making

Incorporate substance use data with other behavioral health indicators to guide district and schoolwide SMP efforts. Relevant school/district data include discipline records, screening results, and Youth Behavior Risk Surveys. Regional/community data include community substance use/misuse trends, overdose rates, and substance prevalence trends (see **Data Profile Workbook** and the **Data Profile Templates** in the [NH MTSS-B TA Center Toolkit](#) for additional indicators).

### Leverage and enhance MTSS-B tiered supports and services

System-level strategies and specific SMP programs and services can be implemented at each MTSS-B tier to support protective factors and reduce risk factors for substance misuse.

#### Tier 1

Schoolwide Tier 1 strategies and programs offer preventative supports to all students in a school, grade, and/or classroom.



## Tier 1 system-level SMP strategies

- ✓ **Universal screening** to identify students with risk factors for substance misuse (e.g., behavioral challenges, change in family structure, family members who use substances, etc.). For more information, see **Universal Social-emotional Screening in Schools** and **Review of Social-emotional Screening Tools** in the [NH MTSS-B TA Center Toolkit](#).
- ✓ **Inclusive school climate** that encourages help-seeking behavior, community connectedness, mental health and wellness, and healthy extra-curricular alternatives.
- ✓ **Health education** to increase awareness about substance misuse and its effects.
- ✓ **Family engagement and education** through parenting classes, presentations by those affected by substance misuse, newsletters, safe storage of prescription medications, drug disposal programs, and community resources for substance misuse prevention and treatment. Include efforts to solicit and incorporate family feedback about concerns, needs, and strategies.
- ✓ **Environmental strategies** to reduce access to drugs and support drug-free school communities, including a health-promoting normative culture, drug-free social events and extracurricular activities, and policies that reduce access to substances.
- ✓ **Schoolwide behavior expectations and response systems** for managing substance misuse incidents with a focus on restorative justice.
- ✓ **Emergency protocols** for drug overdose on school grounds (see the [SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit](#)).
- ✓ **Professional development** for staff that includes social-emotional learning (SEL), MTSS-B, trauma-informed care, and procedures for substance misuse risk identification, referral pathways, and substance misuse emergency protocols.

## Tier 1 SMP programs

In addition to system-level strategies, schools/districts can consider specific programs to support SMP, such as SEL curricula that provide SMP education and skill-building (i.e., problem solving, help-seeking, coping techniques) or programs that offer combined support for students and their families.

The table below provides an overview of five Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-recommended Tier 1 evidence-based programs with features designed to support substance misuse prevention.<sup>2</sup> The content and scope of programs vary and additional research should be done to determine program costs based on a school/district's specific needs.

	Operation Prevention	LifeSkills Training (LST)	Strengthening Families	Positive Action	Michigan Model for Health
<b>Type of program</b>	Online curriculum with teacher guides	8-15 classroom lessons/yr. depending on grade	14-week skill-building groups for students and families	Skills-based elementary- and secondary-level SEL curricula with drug education kits	Skills-based SEL curriculum with specific grade-level lessons on substances
<b>Focus of support</b>	Students (age 8-18) and families	Students (age 10-17), families, communities	Students (age 7-17) and families	Students (age 9-18)	Students (age 4-18)
<b>Evidence of impact on student outcomes *</b>	X	✓	✓	✓	✓



	Operation Prevention	LifeSkills Training (LST)	Strengthening Families	Positive Action	Michigan Model for Health
Defined training program	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coaching/technical assistance	X	✓	✓	X	✓
Professional learning community	X	✓	X	X	✓
Approximate cost	No cost	\$225-265/yr. for 30 students. Training costs vary.	\$450 for 14-wk skills curriculum (parent, children, families). Training costs vary.	Full curriculum from \$1300-2300; drug ed kits by grade from \$250-450. Training costs vary.	\$840 for K-12 digital bundle; teacher manuals \$90; materials kit \$300-400 per grade. Training costs vary.
Other	Cultural and language adaptations available, parent toolkit	Can be taught by various roles (teacher, counselor, peer, etc.)	Cultural adaptations available. 5 staff members needed to lead program.		
Program link	<a href="http://www.operationprevention.com">www.operationprevention.com</a>	<a href="http://www.lifeskillstraining.com">www.lifeskillstraining.com</a>	<a href="http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org">www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org</a>	<a href="http://www.positiveaction.net">www.positiveaction.net</a>	<a href="http://www.michiganmodelforhealth.org">www.michiganmodelforhealth.org</a>

\* SAMHSA's recommendations are based on a series of extensive reviews of published research studies primarily focused on peer-reviewed professional journals. Programs were evaluated to determine if they reduce alcohol or other substance use during adolescence, or the progression to harmful use during young adulthood.

In addition, there are many NH-specific resources that have been recognized by the NH Center for Excellence on Addiction as innovative, promising, or evidence-based substance misuse prevention programs. You can review these at their [Service to Science](#) website page.



## Advanced Tiers

The focus of MTSS-B Advanced Tiers (2/3) is to develop screening and referral systems to identify students at risk for behavioral health concerns and connect them and their families to targeted supports and services as needed. The Advanced Tier system can incorporate SMP system-level strategies, Tier 2 supports for students at risk, and individualized Tier 3 services.

### Advanced Tier system-level SMP strategies

- ✓ **Advanced Tier team protocols** for reviewing student referrals for substance misuse concerns, including crisis intervention protocols specific to substance use (i.e., training on recognizing students who may be under the influence, connecting to help, emergency protocols for drug overdose on school grounds).
- ✓ **Substance misuse screening tools** to determine need for further intervention. These can include [Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to treatment \(SBIRT\)](#); [Car, Relax, Alone, Forget Friends, Trouble \(CRAFT\)](#); [Drug Use Disorders Identification Test \(DUDIT\)](#), and [Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test \(AUDIT\)](#). In NH, student self-report screeners will require opt-in parental consent.
- ✓ **Advanced tier referral systems** for students with substance misuse concerns and related training for all relevant staff. A single request for assistance system streamlines referrals to an Advanced Tier team. Facilitated referral pathways establish inter-organizational protocols with community partners (e.g., release of information) that increase the ease and speed with which students receive services and facilitate timely communication and follow-up.
- ✓ **Tier 3 student support teams** that encourage family engagement in SMP coordinate services and resources for individual youth impacted by substance use and their families.
- ✓ **Community resources** for facilitated access to specialized services for students and their families.

### Tier 2 SMP supports

Tier 2 includes supports for students with risk factors that can contribute to the development of substance misuse and other behavioral health concerns, such as internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression, anxiety, social withdrawal), family history of substance use, friends who engage in substance use, academic struggles, availability of substances, family income/education, etc.).<sup>3</sup> Tier 2 supports offer foundational skills such as social skills, self-regulation, critical problem-solving, etc. that can mitigate risk for development of substance misuse.

Tier 2 **social skills groups** include broader topics that increase protective factors and reduce risks (how to say no, asking for help, stress management techniques, effective communication, peer support).

[Coping Cat](#) is an evidence-based cognitive-behavioral intervention that teaches youth to recognize anxious feelings and develop strategies to cope with anxiety-provoking situations.

[Check-in/Check-out](#) (CICO) can also address general risk factors for substance misuse. CICO is a targeted evidence-based intervention for students with low levels of social-emotional and behavioral concerns that increases opportunities for positive adult interactions each day, supporting the development of self-regulation skills, decreasing problem behaviors, and increasing academic engagement (see **Installing Check-in/Check-out in Tier 2** in the [NH MTSS-B Toolkit](#)).

There are a host of more targeted substance use programs available for integration into your array of Tier 2 supports, including curricula, group interventions, and programs. Some additional examples include:

[Project Towards No Drug Abuse](#) (Project TND), a drug prevention curriculum with a promising research base for high school youth who are at risk for drug use and violent behavior. Interactive sessions include motivational activities to avoid using drugs; skills in self-control, communication, and resource acquisition; and decision-making strategies.

[The Seven Challenges](#), an intervention with a promising research base that can be conducted in group sessions for students with more active substance use concerns. It is designed to help youth self-reflect about their decisions, commit to and implement behavioral changes, and address life skill deficits and situational problems.



## Tier 3 SMP services

Also known as tertiary prevention, Tier 3 offers intensive, individualized services for students with the highest level of need. Prevention at this level seeks to reduce the effects of disorders that have already been established. Tier 3 individualized services include targeted screening and early intervention counseling, family supports, and development of a strong referral system to community-based partners with substance use treatment expertise. Tier 3 SMP strategies and services include:

- ✓ School-based counseling by providers trained in trauma-informed practices and screening for substance use disorders.
- ✓ A referral relationship with a partnering community mental health agency with a Licensed Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselor (LADAC) for students who violate school substance policies or are identified as needing support for substance misuse issues. Privacy and communication protocols, releases, and procedures to document and collaborate on student progress should be in place.

## For more information

This guidance is adapted from publicly available resources that offer more detail to support substance misuse prevention in schools. These include:

**SAMHSA:** SAMHSA's Evidence-based Practices Resource Center provides information and tools to support substance misuse prevention.

**PBIS:** Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) provides an informative webinar entitled "Prevention and Mitigation of Alcohol and Drug Use within a MTSS Framework."

**NHED:** The NH Department of Education's Office of Social and Emotional Wellness offers resources and education on Drug Prevention.

**The Partnership@drugfreeNH:** The Partnership offers resources specific to NH individuals, families, communities, and schools to support healthy decisions around the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Substance Misuse Prevention for Young Adults. Publication No. PEP19-PL-Guide-1 Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019. <https://documentcloud.adobe.com/spodintegration/index.html?locale=en-us>

<sup>2</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Substance Misuse Prevention for Young Adults. Publication No. PEP19-PL-Guide-1 Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019. Substance Misuse Prevention for Young Adults Appendix 2: Evidence-Based Prevention Programs and Policies <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep19-pl-guide-1.pdf>

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