

What is Prevention Institute?

Prevention Institute is a nonprofit, national center dedicated to improving community health and well-being by building momentum for effective primary prevention. Primary prevention means taking action to build resilience and to prevent problems before they occur. The Institute's work is characterized by a strong commitment to community participation and promotion of equitable health outcomes among all social and economic groups. Since its founding in 1997, the organization has focused on injury and violence prevention, traffic safety, health disparities, nutrition and physical activity, and youth development.

What is unique about Prevention Institute's approach?

Reducing current rates of disease and injury is not a simple task. Given the complexity of many health and social issues, primary prevention is an approach that can address these issues and limit the costs and anguish associated with them. Too often, prevention strategies focus on individuals without taking into account their social and physical environment. Prevention Institute moves beyond approaches that target one person at a time to create systematic, comprehensive strategies that change conditions affecting health. For example, an effort to encourage children to eat more nutritious food should address a host of environmental factors, such as the availability of fresh produce in local stores, the presence of snack and beverage vending machines on school campuses, and junk food advertising aimed at children.

Prevention Institute builds on the successes of a variety of fields and applies them to new challenges. Despite the many examples of successful primary prevention – from increasing safety-belt use to banning lead in paint – the essential elements of effective prevention are generally not well understood by policymakers and practitioners. Prevention Institute believes that a consistent approach, combining ideas from a range of disciplines that have traditionally worked independently of one another, is necessary to ensure that prevention efforts are systematic and comprehensive. By linking practices from public health, education, urban planning, social work, and other fields, communities can create conditions for healthier living.

What kinds of expertise and assistance does Prevention Institute offer?

The combined expertise of Prevention Institute staff spans a variety of health issues and prevention methodologies, with an emphasis on coalition-building and systemic change. Among the services the Institute provides are training, technical assistance, research, and evaluation for coalitions, community-based organizations, government agencies, private foundations, and others. In addition to working directly with communities and institutions, Prevention Institute develops tools and other materials to support the crafting, implementation, and evaluation of prevention initiatives. Tools include *The Spectrum of Prevention*, *Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight Step Guide*, and *Evolution to Effective Prevention*. All Prevention Institute materials are available at no cost on the website.

Who are Prevention Institute's partners and funders?

Prevention Institute works with policymakers, professionals, and community members at the local, state, and national level. Partners and funders have included the U.S. Office of Minority Health, The California Endowment, Harvard School of Public Health, The California Wellness Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Prevention Institute is a consultant to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Region IX, assisting with injury-prevention efforts. Prevention Institute is also a founding member and coordinator of the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments, a California-based coalition reframing the debate on nutrition and physical activity from only a matter of individual choice to one of environment, and of corporate and government responsibility.