

SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION

The Spectrum of Prevention is a **systematic tool** that promotes a range of activities for effective prevention. It has been used nationally in prevention initiatives for traffic safety, violence prevention, injury prevention, nutrition, and fitness. The Spectrum identifies six levels of intervention (see image below) and helps people move beyond the perception that prevention is merely education. At each level, the most important activities related to prevention objectives are identified. As these activities are identified, they lead to interrelated actions at other levels of the Spectrum. All six levels are complementary and synergistic: when used together, they have a greater effect than would be possible from a single activity or initiative.

Spectrum of Prevention



- Framework** of strategies for addressing public health issues
- Systematic approach** for developing a multifaceted range of activities for effective prevention
- Helps to plan and create** a clear picture of the actions that are needed to accomplish change in the social norms – knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors

SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION

The Spectrum of Prevention is a systematic tool that promotes a multifaceted range of activities for effective prevention. Originally developed by Larry Cohen while working as Director of Prevention Programs at the Contra Costa County Health Department, the Spectrum is based on the work of Marshall Swift in treating developmental disabilities. It has been used nationally in prevention initiatives targeting traffic safety, violence prevention, injury prevention, nutrition, and fitness.

The Spectrum identifies multiple levels of intervention and helps people move beyond the perception that prevention is merely education. The Spectrum is a framework for a more comprehensive understanding of prevention that includes six levels for strategy development. These levels, delineated in the table below, are complementary and when used together produce a synergy that results in greater effectiveness than would be possible by implementing any single activity or linear initiative. At each level, the most important activities related to prevention objectives should be identified. As these activities are identified they will lead to interrelated actions at other levels of the Spectrum.

LEVEL OF SPECTRUM	DEFINITION OF LEVEL
6. Influencing Policy and Legislation	Developing strategies to change laws and policies to influence outcomes
5. Changing Organizational Practices	Adopting regulations and shaping norms to improve health and safety
4. Fostering Coalitions and Networks	Convening groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact
3. Educating Providers	Informing providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others
2. Promoting Community Education	Reaching groups of people with information and resources to promote health and safety
1. Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills	Enhancing an individual's capability of preventing injury or illness and promoting safety

INFLUENCING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Develop strategies to change laws and policies to influence outcomes

Legislation and other policy initiatives have proven to be among the most effective strategies for achieving broad public health goals. Both formal and informal policies have the ability to affect large numbers of people by improving the environments in which they live and work, encouraging people to lead healthy lifestyles, and providing for consumer protections.

CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

Adopt regulations and shape norms to improve health and safety

Changing organizational practices involves modifying the internal policies and practices of agencies and institutions. This can result in improved health and safety for staff of the organization, better services for clients or students, and a healthier community environment. Advocating for organizational change at agencies such as law enforcement, schools and health departments can result in a broad impact on community health.

FOSTER COALITIONS AND NETWORKS

Bring together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact

Coalitions and networks, composed of community organizations, policy makers, businesses, health providers and community residents working together, can be powerful advocates for change. Coalitions and networks also provide an opportunity for joint planning, system-wide problem solving and collaborative policy development to ensure that the voices of all community sectors are represented in prevention programs.

EDUCATING PROVIDERS

Inform providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others

This strategy reaches an influential group of individuals "in and out of the health field" who have daily contact with large numbers of people at high risk for injury and disease. By educating providers to identify and intervene, professionals, paraprofessionals and community activists working with the public can become front-line advocates for health. Providers can encourage adoption of healthy behaviors, screen for health risks, contribute to community education, and advocate for policies and legislation.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Reach groups of people with information and resources to promote health and safety

The goals of community education are to reach the greatest number of individuals possible with health education messages, as well as to build a critical mass of people who will become involved in improving community health.

STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Enhance an individual's capability to prevent injury/illness and promote safety

This band of the Spectrum represents a classic approach of public health. Public health nurses, health educators and trained community members work directly with clients in the home, community settings or in clinics, providing health information to promote child and family health.