An Introduction to the SPF

A practical way to remember the Strategic Prevention Framework and why each step matters.

What is the SPF?

The Strategic Prevention Framework helps prevention teams move from "activities first" to thoughtful, informed decisions. It gives chapters a clear process for understanding a problem, choosing strategies that fit, carrying them out well, and learning from the results.



A simple memory phrase

Look. Get Ready. Make a Plan. Do the Work. Learn and Improve.

1 Assessment

Look

Why it matters: Take time to understand what is really happening before choosing an activity, campaign, or program.

Look before you leap.

2 Capacity

Get Ready

Why it matters: Make sure the people, partnerships, skills, resources, and support are in place to do the work well.

Build the team before building the strategy.

3 Planning

Make a Plan

Why it matters: Connect the issue to strategies likely to help, then decide who will do what and how success will be measured.

Purpose before posters.

4 Implementation

Do the Work

Why it matters: Put the plan into action with quality, consistency, clear communication, and follow-through.

Do what you planned, and do it well.

5 Evaluation

Learn and Improve

Why it matters: Look at what happened, what worked, what did not, and what should be continued, changed, or stopped next time.

Do not just finish it. Learn from it.



Using the SPF in Prevention Work

The SPF is most useful when it helps a chapter slow down, ask better questions, and make better choices.

How the steps work together

The steps are often listed in order, but effective prevention work is not just a checklist. Teams may learn something during evaluation that changes future assessment. They may realize during planning that they need more capacity. The SPF gives structure while still allowing chapters to adapt thoughtfully.

Two ideas that run through every step

Cultural competence

Prevention work should fit the people and community it is meant to serve. Youth voice, local context, and respect for different experiences matter throughout the process.

Sustainability

Strong prevention work looks beyond one event or one school year. It builds habits, partnerships, leadership, and systems that can continue over time.

The SPF changes the starting question

Instead of starting with, “What activity should we do?” chapters learn to ask better questions first.

- What is the real issue?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What strategy makes sense?
- How will we do it well?
- How will we know what we learned?



Why this matters for youth-led prevention

The SPF does not take creativity away from youth leaders. It gives their creativity a stronger foundation. Youth can still design messages, lead activities, create campaigns, and educate peers — but the work is connected to a real issue, a clear purpose, and a thoughtful plan.



The big idea

The SPF helps chapters focus and make better decisions - so prevention becomes more thoughtful, more organized, and more likely to create meaningful change.