



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For media inquiries, please contact:

Kim Zambole

Director of Communications

217.836.7764

kim.zambole@prevention.org

Prevention First Celebrates Possibility Through National Prevention Week 2026

[Springfield, IL] – April 23, 2026 – Prevention First will be observing National Prevention Week on May 10-16, 2026. Supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), this initiative is dedicated to increasing public awareness of, and action around, substance use disorders and mental health.

[National Prevention Week](#) (NPW) serves as a reminder that healthier communities don't happen by chance; they are built through intentional, ongoing prevention efforts that reach people wherever they are.

"Prevention is most powerful when it's woven into the fabric of everyday life — in our schools, our families, and our communities," said Karel Homrig, CEO of Prevention First. "National Prevention Week is a chance to celebrate that work, share what's possible, and recommit to the young people and communities who depend on it."

In Illinois, substance use among young people remains a significant concern. According to the 2024 [Illinois Youth Survey](#) (IYS), the average age of first alcohol use among Illinois 12th graders is 14.7 years old, and one in five Illinois 8th graders reported using alcohol in the past year. Research consistently shows a strong connection between substance use and mental health: underage drinking, for example, is associated with increased risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidal behavior.

Early intervention is key. According to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) (NIDA), delaying the start of substance use among young people by even one year can decrease substance use for the rest of their lives — making community-based prevention efforts not just valuable, but essential.

Families, communities, and organizations can participate in NPW in a variety of ways:

- Host a community event or activity. Use SAMHSA's [NPW Planning Toolkit](#) to connect local efforts to the national observance.
- Share your prevention story on social media using the hashtags #NationalPreventionWeek26 and #MyPreventionStory.
- Parents and caregivers can use resources like SAMHSA's [Talk. They Hear You.](#) campaign to start conversations with their children about alcohol and other drugs.
- Explore evidence-based resources for substance use prevention and mental health at [prevention.org](#).

If you or a loved one is struggling with substance use, connect with the Illinois Helpline by calling 1-800-662-4357 or visiting [HelplineIL.org](#).

About Prevention First

Prevention First is an Illinois-based nonprofit with more than 40 years of experience in substance use prevention and mental health promotion. Through training, technical assistance, and advocacy, Prevention First equips individuals, families, schools, and communities across Illinois with the knowledge and tools to prevent substance use before it starts. Learn more at [prevention.org](#).

###