To support the unique needs of young adults with disabilities, substance use prevention programs can apply principles from the disability field to proven prevention strategies for young adults. Specifically, prevention programs can:

  - Incorporate equity and accessibility into program practices and policies.[9,10]
  - Use trauma-informed approaches.[11]
  - Create accessible physical and supportive emotional environments.[12,13,14]
  - Be responsive to the needs of young adults with disabilities.[15]
  - Prioritize the importance of cultural responsiveness.[16]
  - Promote positive youth development.[17]

- Programs can integrate these key principles and approaches into evidence-based substance use prevention efforts, such as offering prevention education, incorporating healthy alternatives into the environment, screening for substance use, and implementing harm reduction strategies.
- Peer specialists or peer workers—professionals with lived experience who provide nonclinical support—can draw on their shared experiences to help young adults with disabilities adopt healthy behaviors, including avoiding substance use.
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- Create environments that are supportive and accessible (e.g., ramps, clear pathways, entrances and exits with doorknob grips or handles and automatic door openers).

Despite some evidence of increased risk for substance use among some young adults with disabilities,[3,28] there are few evidence-based substance use prevention programs designed for this population.[3,92,93] Additionally, some young adults with disabilities were unhappy with the prevention programs available to them, as they did not feel that the programming was effective, engaging, or applicable to their experiences.[94] Some limited studies of substance use prevention programs in youth with disabilities have informed the strategies that the following sections of this Advisory discuss.[95,96] However, most are drawn from evidence demonstrating positive outcomes in youth without disabilities, where there is a larger evidence base.[24,93,97]

By incorporating the key principles and approaches this Advisory has described thus far, programs can tailor substance use prevention strategies to meet the unique needs of young adults with disabilities. To develop or further tailor programs, additional research is needed to supplement existing, limited studies of substance use prevention in this population.

Substance Use Prevention Education and Information Dissemination

Prevention education typically uses a twofold approach to teach young people essential skills that help them either avert or minimize substance use or misuse.[98] Skills may include resisting pressure to use substances or making healthier choices and engaging in healthy activities. Prevention education that focuses on young adults delivers positive messages about healthy behaviors and attitudes; messages are designed to address misconceptions that normalize substance use behaviors.[24]

Screening, education, and empowerment are effective approaches to delivering substance use prevention education to young adults.[99] These programs can provide prevention education that addresses inaccurate beliefs—for example, countering the notion that substance use is more common and acceptable among peers by providing data about use among peers. Some aspects of substance use prevention education include:

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Providing Healthy Alternatives to Substance Use

Incorporating healthy alternatives to substance use where young adults with disabilities live, work, and socialize may be an effective approach to preventing substance use.[24,98] This approach offers education about positive alternatives to substance use and has been shown to be effective in reducing substance use in young adults.[98] Offering healthy alternatives provides young adults with opportunities to build healthy relationships, have fun, meet friends, and develop new skills in a substance-free environment. Healthy alternatives that integrate skills building may also help young adults with disabilities reinforce the importance of a healthy, substance-free environment. Examples of activities that could be adapted include adaptive art classes, disability-inclusive group exercise, and volunteer work.

Mental and behavioral issues associated with substance use amoC /MCID 18005e440047004407iated30F00TjE004E0

- Promote physical, mental, and social well-being.
- Offer low-barrier options for accessing SUD treatment.

Although engagement of young adults in harm reduction is limited,[106] harm reduction strategies may be

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The following resources can support prevention specialists who work with people who have disabilities.

- ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Disability & Health Resources for Facilitating Inclusion and Overcoming Barriers
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Modernizing Health Care to Improve Physical Accessibility: A Primer for Providers

- Alliance for Disability in Health Care Education Core Competencies on Disability for Health Care Education
- CDC Become a Disability A.L.L.Y. — Information for Healthcare Providers

- Prevention First Delivering Culturally Responsive Prevention Services
- SAMHSA _____

- SAMHSA _____
- Administration for Children and Families Resources Specifc to People With Disabilities

- Youth.gov Positive Youth Development
- VIA Institute on Character Inventory of Strengths for Youth
- SAMHSA Voices of Youth Initiative

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) _____
- Screen4Success
- SAMHSA Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test

- SAMHSA Harm Reduction Page
- SAMHSA Harm Reduction Framework

- SAMHSA _____
- SAMHSA _____
- SAMHSA 1DWLRQDO 0RGHO 6WDQGDUGV IRU 3HHU 6XSSRUW &HUWL¿FDWLRQ

- Youth.gov Youth Topics, Disabilities
- Seattle University Center for Change in Transition Services Transition Planning Resources
- The Arc of the United States
- Raising Special Kids Empowering Voices: Introducing the Engaging Families & Young Adults Program