

Needs Assessment

The first step in the prevention process is conducting a needs assessment, or an analysis of the alcohol and drug abuse problems on campus and in the surrounding community. The purpose of conducting a needs assessment is to identify and prioritize local substance abuse problems to inform prevention activities and programs that address both individual and environmental factors and conditions. The needs assessment will help determine the scope of alcohol and drug problems and where they are occurring, identify available resources, and assist prevention staff in selecting effective prevention strategies. Components of the needs assessment include:

- Gathering data on the nature and scope of the problem
- Identifying existing resources and key partners
- Analyzing the data to determine needs and opportunities
- Reviewing current prevention efforts and prioritizing action steps
- Assessing the readiness of your campus and community to engage in effective prevention efforts

There are multiple information sources to consult, such as:

- Student surveys
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Focus groups
- Field observations
- Arrest and incident data

The campus task force charged with developing the strategic plan uses data and other information gathered from the needs assessment to help inform the nature, extent, and underlying causes of alcohol- and other drug-related problems among college students.