

Prevention Starts with Policy

Prevention-focused policies are one of the most effective ways to support healthy choices, reduce substance misuse, help students stay engaged in school, and support stronger futures for our children. Vermont has made meaningful progress— and there's more we can do together.

Policies That Make a Difference

1. Support Before Suspension

Policies that focus on care and connection—like a student support room with reflection tools and counseling—promote positive behavior better than those focused on punishment first.

2. Environmental Strategies

Local zoning and enforcement policies that limit access to alcohol, cannabis and tobacco for minors reduce early use and promote healthier norms.

3. Positive In-School Alternatives

School-based activities like arts, outdoor clubs, and dances offer meaningful alternatives to risky environments.

4. Universal Screening Policies

Policies that support early screening help schools identify students at risk and connect them to support services early.

5. Reconnection Plans

When students return to school after time away, reconnection policies can make a big difference, helping them feel safe and supported.

What Strong Prevention Policies Can Do

- ✓ Help students feel more connected to school.
- ✓ Reduce disengagement from classes and activities.
- ✓ Lower rates of substance misuse.



What you can do?

Talk to your school leaders.

Stay informed and know the local policies.

Support stronger prevention policies—at the school, local, and state levels.

Speak up at school board and PTO meetings to advocate for evidence-based policies.

Reach out to elected officials to encourage their support of prevention measures.

Connect with your local prevention organization.

Did You Know?

Vermont school boards are not required to suspend students for substance use. Schools have flexibility to choose supportive approaches that work.

Source: Restorative Justice Principles and Practices in Vermont Schools