



As we move into fall, with crisp nights, changing leaves, football, campfires, and many events related to substance misuse prevention happening in our communities, we thought it a good time to talk a bit about these and how they can impact us, our families, and our communities.

Prevention is a community effort; it requires sustained efforts from all community sectors in order to build stronger, healthier neighborhoods, work places, schools, churches, and organizations. We would love to work with your organization, business, church, school, or community to discuss needs, identify needed resources, and help identify local strategies we can support, and help build a stronger community. Let us know how we can help!

October: National Prevention Month

October is recognized as National Prevention Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of substance misuse prevention and promoting healthier, more resilient communities. The observance began in 2011 with the launch of National Substance Abuse Prevention Month, intentionally aligned with the start of the school year to encourage early engagement with young people and families.

Arkansas's Progress in Prevention

As the Region 4 Prevention Provider, we have witnessed measurable strides across Arkansas. Data collected within the past year shows that the state saw a 26% decline in overdose deaths, dropping from 528 lives lost in 2023 to 388 in 2024. This improvement reflects the collective efforts of expanded naloxone distribution, peer recovery support services, and community education campaigns. Still, challenges remain. Arkansas reported 71.5 opioid prescriptions per 100 residents back in 2023, the highest prescribing rate in the nation. At the same time, youth and young adult substance use continues to be a pressing concern: 8.79% of youth (ages 12–17) were

identified with a substance use disorder in 2023. These statistics remind us that prevention is ongoing work—both a success story and a call to action.

What Is Prevention?

Prevention is the proactive process of reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors before adverse behaviors begin. In the context of substance misuse, prevention means taking steps to stop drug and alcohol use before it starts—particularly among youth and vulnerable groups. There are three levels of Prevention. Primary Prevention targets the general population to stop substance use before it begins. Secondary Prevention, which focuses on early intervention for individuals at higher risk; and Tertiary Prevention, which aims to reduce harm and prevent relapses among individuals with a history of substance misuse who have achieved sobriety.

Effective prevention goes beyond education. It involves creating environments that encourage health and resilience through strong family and peer connections, securing access to mental health care and social support, and developing safe, stable, and opportunity-rich communities. It also means addressing the root causes of misuse, including trauma, poverty, and inequity.

Let's look at The Bigger Picture

Ultimately, prevention is about empowerment. It gives individuals and communities the tools, knowledge, and support they need to make healthy decisions and thrive. National Prevention Month reminds us that while progress is being made, the work must continue—because prevention is not a one-time event but a lifelong commitment to building a healthier Arkansas.

Region 4 Prevention Strategies

To address these challenges, RSI, your Region 4 Prevention Provider, continues to advance a variety of prevention strategies, including: school-based education and youth engagement initiatives, naloxone training and overdose response programs, supporting community coalitions, and media campaigns to build awareness. By building on successes while addressing gaps, Arkansas is creating stronger, safer communities.

 Sources: NonOpioidChoices.org – Arkansas Opioid Crisis 2025. Methadone.org – Arkansas Drug & Alcohol Statistics 2025. Axios – Arkansas Overdose Deaths Dropped 26% in 2024. Arkansas DHS – Strategic Plan 2025–2030

Red Ribbon Week Starts October 23rd!

Red Ribbon Week is the nation's largest and longest-running drug-use prevention campaign, uniting millions of people across the country each year. What began as a grassroots movement has grown into a national tradition—one that encourages communities, schools, and families to stand together for a drug-free future.

With research showing that many adolescents are first exposed to drugs as early as age 12, prevention efforts have never been more important. Recognizing the signs of substance use, knowing where to seek help, and starting open conversations with young people are critical steps in protecting our future generations.

This year's theme, "*Life is a Puzzle, Solve it Drug Free!*", reminds us that every choice plays a part in building a healthy, complete life. By working together, we can give young people the tools and encouragement they need to make safe, informed decisions.

We invite you to take the [Red Ribbon Campaign Pledge](#)—a commitment for both parents and youth to:

- Engage in honest conversations about the dangers of drug use.
- Support those in need with resources and encouragement.
- Lead by example through self-respect, discipline, and positive choices.

At Research Solutions Inc., we believe one person's actions can make a lasting difference. Whether you're a parent, educator, or community member, your involvement can help change—and even save a life.