

The Meaning of Prevention and Promotion: A Brief Summary

The idea of prevention has a longstanding history in the health sciences, particularly in the field of public health. Associated with the term public health “prevention” is a specific framework that is in wide use although it has been revised and tweaked for decades. Other fields of practice, including juvenile delinquency and education, have also developed prevention frameworks with elements that are appropriate to those domains. However, there is little development of the concept of “promotion” across different fields of practice.

This brief memo outlines the common meaning of “prevention” and “promotion” and its application across practice domains like public health, juvenile delinquency, and education. Its aim is to define the terms “prevention” and “promotion” and to review frameworks from multiple fields of practice to illuminate the building blocks that are needed to create an overarching prevention and promotion framework for Los Angeles County.

Defining Prevention and Promotion

The meaning of “prevention” and “promotion” is straightforward based on both dictionary definitions and common usage across the prevention fields reviewed below:

Prevention: *to stop the occurrence of undesired population outcomes.*

- Examples include child maltreatment, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, high school dropout, felony convictions, chronic illness, premature death, etc.

Promotion: *to support the occurrence of desired population outcomes.*

- Examples include good child health, good grades, high school graduation, good paying jobs, stable housing, healthy births, etc.

Prevention Frameworks

Prevention frameworks have developed for different fields of practice over the past few decades, with some of the earliest and most influential having been created in the field of public health. **This section of the memo will briefly summarize prevention frameworks from three fields of practice—Public Health, Juvenile Delinquency and Education—in order to show commonalities and differences that may be useful for defining a prevention intervention framework for LA County.**

Public Health

The public health field has a long record of prevention intervention addressing infectious diseases and mass immunization which have dramatically reduced deaths due to many diseases. Prevention frameworks informing these efforts have evolved over decades since the late 1950s. Table 1 summarizes the key elements of each framework iteration. The original prevention framework in the field of public health was introduced in 1957 by the Commission on Chronic Illness. It provided three levels of prevention interventions whose primary goal was to prevent illness or disorders: **primary, secondary,**

and tertiary.¹ This initial classification produced much confusion and disagreement in the field and was not widely adopted. In 1987, Robert S. Gordon proposed a revision to the Commission’s framework that became more influential in the field of public health. It also divided prevention intervention into three levels: **universal, selective, indicated**. In the early 1990s, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) proposed additional revisions to Gordon’s three-level framework while retaining the language used to describe each level of prevention. All three iterations of the public health prevention framework listed in Table 1 are “**intervention**” frameworks in that they are focused on administering preventative interventions to specified groups based upon their risk or presence of an illness or disorder.

Table 1. Public Health Prevention Frameworks

The Commission on Chronic Illness (1957)	Gordon (1987)	Institute of Medicine (1994)	Weisz et al. (2005)
<p>Primary: which seeks to decrease the number of new cases of a disorder or illness</p> <p>Secondary: which seeks to lower the rate of established cases of a disorder or illness in the population (prevalence)</p> <p>Tertiary: which seeks to decrease the amount of disability associated with an existing disorder.</p>	<p>Universal: Interventions that are desirable for everyone in the eligible population if the benefits outweigh the costs</p> <p>Selective: Interventions for those with above average risk of having the undesired outcome</p> <p>Indicated: Interventions for individuals who, on examination, are found to manifest a risk factor or condition that identifies them as being at high risk for the future development of a disease</p>	<p>Universal: interventions are targeted to the whole population that has not been identified on the basis of individual risk.</p> <p>Selective: interventions are targeted to individuals or a subgroup of the population whose risk of developing illness is significantly higher than average. The risk may be imminent or it may be a lifetime risk</p> <p>Indicated: interventions targeted to high-risk individuals who are identified as having minimal but detectable signs or symptoms foreshadowing an illness or disorder but who do not meet clinical criteria levels at the current time</p>	<p>Universal: Approaches designed to address risk factors in entire populations of youth without attempting to discern which populations have elevated risk for the undesired outcome</p> <p>Selective: Target population groups identified to share a significant risk factor for the undesired outcome</p> <p>Indicated: Target groups in the early stages of the undesired outcome</p> <p>Treatment/Reversal: Target those who show the undesired outcome to reverse it, minimize it, or mitigate its effects</p>

Juvenile Delinquency

In the early 1990s, the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) developed a Comprehensive Strategy Framework for delinquency prevention. The framework consists of six prevention levels ranging from those who have not engaged in delinquency to those leaving secure confinement. **This framework is also an intervention framework** prescribing different interventions

¹ Commission on Chronic Illness. (1957) Chronic Illness in the United States. Vol. 1. Published for the Commonwealth Fund. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press;

based upon risk and protective factors or the seriousness and recurrence of delinquency. The **six levels** include:

- **Level 1:** Prevention of delinquency by reducing risk and enhancing protection
- **Level 2:** Early intervention with predelinquent and child delinquents and their families
- **Level 3:** Immediate intervention for first-time delinquent offenders (misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies) and nonserious repeat offenders
- **Level 4:** Intermediate sanctions for first-time serious or violent offenders, including intensive supervision for serious, violence and chronic offenders
- **Level 5:** Secure corrections for the most serious, violent, and chronic offenders
- **Level 6:** Aftercare or reentry

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in Schools

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is an intervention framework that helps educators provide academic and behavioral support strategies to students with different levels of needs. MTSS emerged out the integration of two prior intervention frameworks in the 2000s: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Intervention in Schools (PBIS). MTSS includes universal screening each school year, ongoing data collection, continual assessment, and the **administering of different interventions in three tiers:**

- **Tier 1** is primary or universal interventions provided to the majority of school students that include core instruction and basic interventions.
- **Tier 2** is a secondary prevention level provided to those that do not respond effectively to Tier 1 interventions. This tier provides additional assistance in small groups settings to help students meet academic and behavioral goals.
- **Tier 3** is a tertiary level of prevention that is provided to those who fail to respond effectively to interventions in Tiers 1 or 2. These students are provided individualized supports that may include referrals to outside agencies.

How the different intervention frameworks conceptualize prevention:

Provide different interventions to different groups based on risk/protection and the imminence of the first instance of an undesired outcome (Public Health): Public health prevention intervention frameworks differentiate the overall population into groups based upon risk and protective factors and the imminence of an undesired health outcome. Different types of interventions are provided to these different groups.

Impose sanctions and provide supports that match in intensity the seriousness and recurrence of the undesired outcome once it has occurred (Delinquency): The OJJDP model provides for both supports and sanctions that become more intense as the seriousness or recurrence of delinquency increases and becomes less intense as seriousness or recurrence decline. The presence or sanctions as well as supports is an important element in this framework. Risk and protective factors are less important than the seriousness and recurrence of delinquency in determining the intensity of intervention.

Provide increasing service intensity based upon how students respond to less intensive levels of service in addressing the undesired outcome(s). Grouping into levels is based on response to intervention in terms of desired and undesired outcomes. (MTSS): MTSS bases the intensity of support services not on risk or protective factors, but on whether students respond effectively to less intense forms of intervention delivered in a lower intervention tier.

All of these approaches offer lessons to be considered in how the Prevention Task Force will define its intervention framework.

Prevention and Promotion Framework

Most “prevention” frameworks adopted across fields are intervention frameworks that are primarily about which interventions should be provided to which populations and when. There are, however, other frameworks that are assumed to also occur with intervention frameworks. These additional frameworks are listed in Table 2 as “Building Block Frameworks.” For example:

- A **“problem” framework** is a framework for understanding and defining the problem(s) to be solved including: what outcomes should be prevented, which ones should be promoted and what are the risk and protective factors for both.
- An **implementation framework** provides guidance on the many things that will have to be completed in order to successfully implement interventions that will work in the manner that is desired.
- An **Evaluation & Learning framework** helps identify what is necessary to learn from implementing interventions and understanding their impact

Table 2. Prevention and Promotion Building Block Frameworks

Framework	Purpose	Examples
Problem Framework	Understanding and defining the population problem(s) to be solved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Course Framework • Social Genome Model • Results-Based Accountability
Intervention Framework	Choosing and allocating interventions to address the population problem(s) based on risk and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary, Secondary, Tertiary • Universal, Selective, Indicated • Comprehensive Strategy Framework (delinquency) • Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
Implementation Framework	Implementing chosen interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIRN Active Implementation Framework • EPIS Framework • Balanced Scorecard
Evaluation & Learning Framework	Evaluating the process of implementation and their impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCT Impact Evaluation • Quasi-Experimental Evaluation

Defining Prevention and Promotion for LA County’s Prevention Task Force

Framework	Purpose	Examples
	to support continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developmental Evaluation• Improvement Cycles