



POLICYMAKERS AS PARTNERS IN PREVENTION

The Ohio Wellness & Prevention Network is bringing together prevention organizations to engage policymakers and elevate wellness as a policy priority. Many different policymakers at all levels of Ohio government make decisions that impact health. This fact sheet describes different types of policymakers and examples of ways that prevention organizations interact with them.

What is a policymaker?

A policymaker is a person with power to influence or determine policies and practices at a national, state, regional, or local level. Public policymakers include elected and appointed officials and leaders of public agencies. State-level public policymakers include legislators, the governor and governor's staff, state agency leaders, and state boards. Local level public policymakers include mayors, county commissioners, city council members, public boards and commissions, and school superintendents and school board members. The figure below lists examples of the types of policymakers with which prevention organizations often work.

Type of Public Policymaker	Example policymaker actions related to wellness and prevention
State Level	
State legislator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support, official proclamation • Introduce, champion, or vote for specific legislation • Support allocation of funding from state budget
State agency leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible leadership, champion for an issue, use of "bully pulpit" • Add or change a regulation or rule • Enforcement of an existing law, policy, regulation, or rule • Allocate funding from department budget
State boards and commissions (Board of Regents, Medical Board, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support • Add or change a regulation or rule or other change in policy (e.g., tobacco-free campus policies) • Direct investment or budget allocation
Advisory groups (mandated state-level advisory committees, such as State Medical Care Advisory Group, or Legislative Committee on Public Health Futures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make recommendations on rules, regulations, legislation, or budget allocation
Local & Regional Level	
Mayor, county commissioners, city council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support, official proclamation, champion for an issue • Participation in a collaborative or coalition • Access to city/county property as a location for a prevention initiative • Add or change a regulation (e.g., require new developments to include bike racks and pedestrian access) • Enforcement of an existing law, policy, or regulation • Introduce, champion, or vote for specific legislation • Support for a local tax levy or ballot measure • Allocate funding from city budget or advocate for state or federal funding
Local school district (Superintendent, school board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support • Participation in a collaborative or coalition • Access to the school building/property as a location for a prevention initiative, joint-use agreements, and/or access to students to participate • Access to class time to implement prevention activity • Access to teachers or other school staff for prevention-related training and implementation • Access to school data or records, or participation in evaluation • A change in school policy or in a school environment (e.g., anti-bullying or tobacco-free campus policies) • Enforcement or training related to a school policy • Funding from district budget
Regional planning commission; zoning, land use, transportation, or housing authority; land bank or metropolitan planning organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support • Development of guidelines that support prevention • Access to data (e.g., land use patterns, density, traffic crash statistics, development, foreclosure data) • Incorporate prevention elements into funding criteria for housing or roadway development projects • Policy or systems change in support of positive changes to the built environment • Enforcement of existing laws, policy, or regulations that support positive changes to the built environment
Other local boards or commissions (boards of health, ADAM/CMHR boards, DD boards, parks and recreation, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support • Participation in a collaborative or coalition • Policy or systems change (e.g., requiring staff training on health equity or suicide prevention) • Allocate funding for prevention
Law enforcement (sheriffs, police chiefs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support • Participation in a collaborative or coalition • Policy or systems change (e.g., requiring staff training on mental illness) • Access to data (e.g., crime statistics)

What kinds of things do prevention organizations ask policymakers to do?

Policymakers at all levels of government make many decisions that impact health. Some decisions apply to health care services, such as determining eligibility for Medicaid or requiring vaccinations for school children. Other decisions impact the community factors that shape health, such as housing codes requiring lead paint abatement or city ordinances requiring sidewalks. Finally, policymakers are responsible for allocating public funds which can be used to support prevention activities, such as school-based prevention initiatives or public education campaigns.

Prevention organizations typically advocate to policymakers for a policy change or for funding. But there are other ways that prevention organizations seek to engage policymakers, particularly at the local level. The figure below illustrates the range of actions prevention organizations may seek from policymakers.

Continuum of public policymaker engagement in prevention

Awareness	Support	Participation	Commitment	Policy	Funding
Aware of the prevention issue	Public show of support (e.g., issue a proclamation, attend events)	Participate in a prevention organization or coalition (e.g., serve on Leadership Council of a local prevention collaborative)	Provide access or commit in-kind resources Access to staff, building/grounds, students, etc. (e.g., superintendent allows training of teachers in prevention strategy)	Introduce or support a policy change: regulation, legislation, ballot measures, tax levies	Budget allocation

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