

## COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Implementation of the exemption to decriminalize the possession of certain illegal drugs for personal use in British Columbia
Purpose:	<p>This plan describes how the Government of BC will inform the public on when and how the exemption to decriminalize personal possession of certain illicit drugs will be implemented in the province, up to, including and after the exemption begins on January 31, 2023.</p> <p>The purpose of this plan is to outline, in detail, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions' integrated communications strategies to inform the public, families, municipalities, partners and businesses, with the aim of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing knowledge and awareness of the exemption;</li><li>• Preventing misinformation;</li><li>• Ensuring people in British Columbia, including visitors from other provinces and countries, understand the exemption and where and when it applies to them;</li><li>• Reducing the stigma around substance use;</li><li>• Communicating how to access local health and social supports for people found in possession of small amounts of illegal drugs listed in the exemption;</li><li>• Providing information on the exceptions and how they intersect with current provincial laws;</li><li>• Raising awareness on the ongoing risks related to the toxic illegal drug supply.</li></ul> <p>All materials will be shared and finalized in collaboration with Health Canada.</p> <p>Activities related to engagement will follow in a separate document.</p>
Background/ Context:	<p>Drug toxicity is now the leading cause of death amongst British Columbians aged 19 to 39, and the second leading cause of death overall. Since the declaration of the public health emergency in April of 2016, more than 10,000 British Columbians have died from illicit drug toxicity.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic permanently disrupted the supply trends of illicit drugs, leading to increased toxicity and unpredictability. During the first months of 2020, the concentration of fentanyl detected in illicit drug deaths was between four and eight percent. In the last months of 2021</p>

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	<p>this had increased to between 24 and 28 percent – a staggering increase in less than two years.</p> <p>On November 1, 2021, B.C. became the first province in Canada to seek an exemption from Health Canada under subsection 56(1) of the <i>Controlled Drugs and Substances Act</i> (CDSA) for adults (18 years of age and older) in the province to possess small amounts of certain illegal substances for personal use.</p> <p>On May 31, 2022, Health Canada granted B.C.'s request for an exemption, which will be in effect from Jan. 31, 2023 to Jan. 31, 2026. Since then, the Province has accelerated plans for implementation.</p> <p>The goal in the months leading up to Jan. 31 is to educate the public on the exemption to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of certain illegal substances for personal use, while also working to reduce the fear and shame associated with substance use that prevents people from reaching out for help.</p>
Communication Objectives:	s.13
Audiences:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who have been impacted by the toxic drug crisis in British Columbia</li> <li>• People who use drugs and their families in British Columbia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housed, experiencing homelessness and in encampments.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Peer and people who are using drugs, drug user associations and groups</li> <li>○ Men between 19-49 who use drugs and are at increased risk of an overdose</li> <li>● British Columbians who may be concerned about what the exemption means for their family and community.</li> <li>● Parents who want to understand how this impacts their children.</li> <li>● Youth, including those under the age of 18, to whom the exemption does not apply, as well as students.</li> <li>● First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in British Columbia.</li> <li>● People visiting B.C.</li> <li>● Racialized groups and people in B.C.</li> <li>● Media and the general public.</li> </ul> <p>Secondary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Service providers in British Columbia.</li> <li>● Other provinces/territories including municipalities, international community.</li> <li>● Health authorities in British Columbia.</li> <li>● Police in British Columbia, including RCMP.</li> </ul>
Communication strategy	<p>This plan provides communications messages and tactics to support government's implementation of the exemption to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of certain illegal drugs in B.C. Working closely with Health Canada for comment and review, this plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Raise awareness of the exemption and what it means for people, including when it applies and how it intersects with other laws.</li> <li>● Raise awareness of how to access local health and social supports for people who use drugs, their families, friends, and communities.</li> <li>● Raise awareness of law enforcement's role in carrying out this exemption.</li> <li>● Facilitates a clear and easy to understand message to explain the exemption across traditional media channels, digital media and government owned assets, in multiple languages.</li> <li>● Communicate that youth are not included under the exemption and highlight specialized services to support young people dealing with mental health and substance use challenges.</li> <li>● Reiterate the dangers of the toxic drug supply and the health care services currently available to people, in order to reduce stigma as well as prevent toxic drug deaths and save lives.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces the shame and fear often associated with drug use that prevents people from reaching out for help.</li> </ul>
Key Messages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We know that drug use is a public health matter – not a criminal justice one.</li> <li>Criminalization drives people to hide their drug use and often use alone. Given the increasingly toxic drug supply – using alone can be fatal.</li> <li>The federal government has approved an exemption so that adults (18 years and older) in B.C. are not subject to criminal penalties of small amounts of certain illegal drugs for personal use.</li> <li>This will help break down the barriers that prevent people from getting support and create new pathways to life-saving services.</li> <li>This exemption is not legalization. Drug trafficking and drug-related offences involving any illegal substances in any amounts remains illegal.</li> <li>Reducing stigma around drug use is a vital part of B.C.'s work to build a comprehensive system of mental health and substance use care for people throughout the province.</li> <li>The province has worked – and will continue to work – closely with the federal government, health authorities, local governments, Indigenous partners, police, people with lived experience and community service providers to implement, monitor and evaluate this exemption throughout B.C. from January 31, 2023 until January 31, 2026.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key terms</b> Exemption to decriminalize, stigma, harm reduction, toxic drug crisis</p>
Timeline:	<p><b>November 2020</b> – Premier Horgan directed Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to <i>“fast track the move toward decriminalization by working police chiefs to push Ottawa to decriminalize simple possession of small amounts of illicit drugs for personal use.”</i></p> <p><b>November 1, 2021</b> - Minister Malcolmson announces the province has submitted its application for an exemption under subsection 56(1) of the CDSA to Health Canada to decriminalize personal possession of illicit substances in the Province of BC.</p> <p><b>May 31, 2022</b> – Health Canada grants the province's request for a subsection 56(1) exemption. Minister Malcolmson and Minister Bennett announced the granting of BC's exemption in Vancouver.</p>



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	<p><b>September/October 2022</b> – Focus groups convene and reported back to communications team.</p> <p><b>October 2022 to Jan. 31, 2023</b> – Supporting announcements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Launch of the <i>Stop the Stigma</i> Campaign in paid media markets to reinforce addictions as a health care issue.</li><li>• Update Gov.bc.ca/decriminalization website with details on the exemption, including commons questions.</li><li>• Launch of program to train law enforcement on how to implement the exemption.</li><li>• Launch of search engine optimization and search engine marketing to drive people to government channels for more information on the exemption.</li><li>• Announce on Jan. 31, 2023 that the exemption is now in effect until Jan. 31, 2026.</li></ul>
Potential Issues:	s.13

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	<p>they have not been adequately consulted on the implementation of the exemption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What will be the indicators evaluated to ensure the exemption is working.</li><li>• Post-implementation, some expectations will be that the number of overdose deaths will be reduced. It may not be a short term concrete result of the implemented exemption.</li></ul>
Research:	<p><b>Public opinion polling</b> has been conducted by MMHA starting in March 2021 through to December 2021 as part of ongoing social market research.</p> <p>Key insights show strong support for decriminalization, with <b>81 percent</b> of B.C. residents against criminal charges for personal possession and <b>seven-in-ten</b> residents agreeing with B.C.'s proposal to decriminalize possession of small amounts of illegal drugs.</p> <p><b>Focus groups</b> were held virtually across the province in September and early October to gauge the level of concern and understanding among the general public, as well as Chinese and South Asian populations.</p> <p>Key findings from the focus groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A clear understanding of B.C.'s drug crisis and its many facets and implications. Supporters have a good understanding of the proposed new measures and strategies needed to stop the crisis. Those opposed to decriminalization are not persuaded by the government's position.</li><li>• Regardless of level of support, many participants share the view that decriminalization is not a panacea to the current drug crisis B.C. is facing and should not be treated as such. Many want to see decriminalization incorporated as part of a multi-faceted plan that expands existing resources to better support those with mental health and addiction challenges.</li><li>• Most participants understand the distinction between legalizing a drug, such as cannabis, and decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of certain drugs for personal use.</li><li>• Participants expressed an expectation of front-line criminal justice resources, no longer being used toward criminalizing the</li></ul>

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possession of small amounts of illicit drugs, being redirected to health care and social services to help alleviate stresses and reduce wait times.

**Consultations with people with lived and living experience** took place in early fall to inform key messages as well as mitigate risk of further stigmatizing people who use drugs. These sessions provided important contextual information to help frame communications materials across multiple channels for a variety of audiences.

Research was led by GCPE Headquarters, supported by the Partnerships and Engagement team in MMHA.

Below are the results of this consultation:

### **Personal experiences around criminalization**

Many of the attendees spoke about their personal experiences surrounding the shame and stigma related to substance use and how this can be amplified through criminalization. Attendees spoke about the trauma surrounding their experiences with criminalization and others shared the barriers this could bring. Criminalization can impact relationships with family, friends, employment, future opportunities, and, importantly, a person's self worth. The ramifications of criminalization can extend across a person's lifespan. Decriminalization is seen to be one tool the government can use to remove one of the possible layers of stigma around substance use and addiction, signaling that these are public health issues rather than criminal justice ones.

### **Concerns about decriminalization**

Similar to the gen pop focus groups, participants spoke about concerns they have around the implementation of decriminalization in B.C. There was a sentiment that decriminalization could raise alarm bells or increase fears for everyday people living in B.C. Community's fears around criminal activity related to substance use could easily be elevated if people believe that decriminalization is a runway to legalization. Similarly, participants spoke about community concerns around increased drug use, increases in drug paraphernalia in neighbourhoods as well as substance use related vandalism, though they identified that these problems mainly arise from the criminalization of substance use, which creates a lack of alternatives or options for people. Other concerns expressed were around the lack of deterrents to using drugs and leading more people to the toxic drug supply.

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	<p><b>Perceived benefits around decriminalization</b></p> <p>There was wide recognition in the group that decriminalization sends an important message that substance use, and addiction are issues of public health and not criminal justice. Criminalizing people who use drugs is seen to be a waste of money and the resources could be redirected into more proactive, preventative measures. One participant spoke about how criminalizing people who use drugs is the moral failing, not substance use. Participants also spoke about how avoiding interactions with the criminal justice system will allow people who use drugs more opportunities to take control of their lives and make informed decisions about their future, offering different pathways forwards. Other sentiments were around how decriminalization offered an opportunity for human potential to be returned back to society. Overall, decriminalization is seen as one of the tools government can use, but not the 'be all, end all' to the toxic drug crisis. Participants spoke about the importance of both harm reduction and treatment services, and that decriminalization may help people access these supports if there is less self-stigma and shame surrounding their behaviour.</p> <p><b>Public communications about decriminalization</b></p> <p>Participants spoke to the importance of striking a balance when educating the general public about decriminalization. There is a risk of elevating fears in the community and raising alarm bells, especially in the context of heightened awareness around public safety and repeat offenders in the media. On the other hand, there is an opportunity to send a message that addiction is a health condition and people experiencing addiction should not be criminalized. Further, participants felt that there were practical advantages to decriminalization for the government and people of B.C., and that the government should be open in sharing those. Providing clear links and reasons about why the government is taking this approach was also seen to be helpful to help the general population understand how decriminalization fits into the bigger picture.</p> <p><b>Public Opinion Research</b> will be going to market in December and will provide a baseline for further public understanding of decriminalization. More information can be found in <i>Section F</i>.</p>
Digital Strategy:	The plan will be supported by a comprehensive owned digital strategy to ensure there is a 'source of truth' regarding the exemption to decriminalize the possession of certain illicit substances on gov.bc.ca, while also leveraging government's social media presence.

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	<p>Owned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facts about the exemption in plain language for a general audience available on this page: <a href="http://www.gov.bc.ca/decriminalization">www.gov.bc.ca/decriminalization</a></li> <li>• This page has been updated and reviewed by Health Canada to answer the “6 W’s” of the exemption.</li> <li>• A factsheet to promote understanding of the exemption.</li> <li>• This page will also be available in Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, French and other relevant languages.</li> <li>• Given the number of visits to the federal webpage on the exemption is from people located in BC, MMHA GCPE will work with the federal government to ensure the above website has similar messaging to the federal government’s page on the exemption and vice-versa for consistent and clear information on the exemption.</li> </ul> <p>Shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media posts – including a carousel post – on the Government of BC Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms.</li> <li>• This material will be shared with Health Canada for review and cross promotion.</li> <li>• Previous content posted on May 31, 2022 had a very good response and strong engagement.</li> <li>• Social media posts will aim to meet the communications objectives described above, including increasing knowledge and understanding of the exemption, reducing stigma, and promoting mental health and substance use supports.</li> <li>• Through answering questions and comments on social posts and in responses to direct messages, we can counter negative reaction from British Columbians and other groups who may not understand the purpose of the exemption.</li> <li>• Pre-prepared content for MLAs and stakeholders to share with their audiences, including a toolkit with fact sheet/key messages (to be produced by MMHA comms shop), social media graphics (to be produced by digital).</li> <li>• Social media posts will also be translated into various languages to increase the accessibility of this content.</li> </ul> <p><i>*Please see Section C for a full digital strategy</i></p>
Earned media	Government Communications and Public Engagement will undertake a comprehensive, cross-ministry earned media campaign to support the implementation of the exemption to decriminalize the possession of certain illegal substances.

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	<p><b>Communications tools include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News releases, as well as translations into other languages such as Punjabi, traditional and simplified Chinese, and French.</li> <li>• Media availabilities</li> <li>• Targeted media interviews (print, radio and TV)</li> <li>• Technical briefings for in-community media, including Chinese and South Asian outlets</li> <li>• Stakeholder media</li> <li>• Coordinated announcement calendar</li> <li>• MMHA GCPCE will monitor media coverage and do outreach to correct any misinformation.</li> </ul> <p><i>*Please see Section C for a full earned media strategy</i></p>
Paid media	<p>Government Communications and Public Engagement have created a public awareness strategy to demonstrate how government is urgently responding to the ongoing toxic drug crisis and tackling escalating mental health and substance use concerns throughout the province.</p> <p><i>*Please see Section D for the full paid advertising plan.</i></p>
<b>Additional Tactics</b>	
Stop the Stigma campaign	<p>The Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions will continue to support stigma reduction in the general population through the Stop the Stigma campaign. A paid media campaign will be in market in fall 2022 (October-November) with a focus on shifting the perception that addiction is a complex health condition, and not a choice.</p>
StopOverdoseBC.ca	<p>In addition to the above paid media campaign, we will also leverage the existing StopOverdoseBC.ca website. This website focuses on reducing stigma around substance use and communicating the dangers of the increasingly toxic drug supply.</p> <p>Content regarding the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain substances will be woven into <a href="https://stopoverdosebc.ca">StopOverdoseBC.ca</a> in a variety of ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational, plain-language information written and highlighted on the site for a general population audience</li> <li>• Story-telling, point-of-view information to build understanding and compassion</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking strategies (to gov.bc.ca or other sites as appropriate)</li> </ul>
Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca	<p>The Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions will also support content and wayfinding to mental health and substance use services through the <a href="#">Wellbeing website</a>.</p> <p>Specifically, content regarding the exemption will be available on a unique page – Stay Safer – which will be written for a general population audience.</p> <p>The site also features a guided search function to help people find services specific to their needs and their region.</p> <p>A resource card (print material) will be developed for community stakeholders (health authorities and law enforcement, for example) to provide to people who use drugs to ensure that health service information is available to them via the Wellbeing website.</p> <p><i>*See Section E for details</i></p>
Public Engagement Working Group	<p>MMHA will also continue to work closely with the existing province-wide public engagement working group, which is made up of health authority communications teams (focused on overdose response), in order to ensure that exemption messaging reaches communities effectively. This will also support the frame that substance use and addictions are public health issues.</p> <p>The Province will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly updates about implementation of the exemption communications activities, both before and after January 31;</li> <li>• Communication materials, such as a digital toolkit with downloadable assets such as social media posts and imagery or print materials, to ensure consistent communication across channels;</li> <li>• Key messages for grassroots and organic outreach in communities.</li> </ul>
Stakeholder/Partner Engagement	<p>Opportunities for grassroots outreach (TBC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Planning Table</li> <li>• Sub-working groups (research and evaluation, municipal, law enforcement readiness)</li> <li>• UBCM pre-conference panel session</li> <li>• First Nations town halls</li> <li>• Other Indigenous consultation and engagement</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Action Teams</li> </ul>
Master KMQA	<p>The Ministry's Government Communication and Public Engagement team, in collaboration with program staff, have created a master KMQA document, which includes key messages and questions and answers from a variety of sectors, such as municipalities, childcare, First Nations and airports.</p> <p>This document will be a main source of truth and will be used to develop future communications materials related to the exemption.</p>
Post-implementation	<p>After implementation on January 31, 2023, the Ministry's Government Communications and Public Engagement team will continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to media requests, monitor media coverage, and do outreach to correct misinformation;</li> <li>• Continue to reference decriminalization, as one tool in B.C.'s fight against the toxic drug crisis, in communications materials and media requests;</li> <li>• Plan social media posts around relevant national/provincial days, such as International Overdose Awareness Day, National Addictions Awareness Week, as they relate to reducing stigma;</li> <li>• Write additional news releases/plan events surrounding the anniversary of decriminalization, when relevant. For example, the first or secondary year-anniversary of the implementation of the exemption or a benchmark in B.C.'s evaluation process;</li> <li>• The Ministry's communications and program teams will continue to respond to stakeholder questions around the exemption as they arise, using the master KMQA.</li> </ul>



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### SECTION A: Draft Critical Path

#### Critical Path

Timing	Activity	Status	Notes
<b>AUGUST 2022</b>			
October	<b>Stop the Stigma campaign in market</b>	<b>Status:</b> Scheduled <b>Lead:</b> Partnerships and engagement team	
<b>NOVEMBER 2022</b>			
Sunday, November 20-Saturday, November 26	<b>National Addictions Awareness Week</b>  Series of social media tweets for MSM to update on implementation progress and reiterate the importance of harm reducing supports.	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> GCPE MMHA	
<b>DECEMBER 2022</b>			
December TBC	<b>Resource cards</b> are finalized, and printing begins.	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> Partnerships and engagement team	
<b>JANUARY 2023</b>			
Early January TBC	<b>Resource cards</b> are distributed to organizations and law enforcement agencies across the province.	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> Partnerships and engagement team	
Early January TBC	<b>ANNOUNCEMENT: Building new connections to care</b>  MMHA will release a province-wide news release and backgrounders about building new healthcare pathways to connect people to supports,	<b>Status:</b> On-going <b>Lead:</b> GCPE MMHA	

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	police training and building a system of mental health and addictions care, ahead of implementation on January 31, as well as an update on the evaluation.		
Mid-January	<b>Launch of paid search engine optimization and search engine marketing campaign</b> to drive people to drive people to government channels for more information on the exemption.	<b>Status:</b> Ongoing <b>Lead:</b> Partnerships and engagement team	
Monday, January 16 – Monday, January 23	Develop and finalize materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News release</li> <li>• KMQA</li> <li>• SN for MSM</li> <li>• EP</li> </ul>	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> GCPE MMHA	
Monday, Jan. 30 TBC	<b>TECHNICAL MEDIA BRIEFING: Exemption to decriminalize</b>  Health Canada and MMHA officials will conduct a technical briefing via phone for media.	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> Health Canada	Materials will be available for media 1 hour in advance.
Tuesday, Jan. 31 TBC	<b>ANNOUNCEMENT: Exemption to decriminalize possession of certain substances for personal use takes effect</b>  Minister Whiteside and stakeholders hold news conference following technical briefing to announce the exemption to decriminalize the possession of certain substances officially takes effect.	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> GCPE HQ, GCPE MMHA, Health Canada	
Tuesday, Jan.31	Minister Whiteside does earned media (print, radio, TV) interviews, including in-language media.	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> GCPE MMHA	Focus would be to get MJW on the CBC circuit, major news outlets and

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			in-language media.
End of January	Stop the Stigma radio buy campaign launches	<b>Status:</b> Ongoing <b>Lead:</b> GCPE HQ	
Tuesday, Jan. 31	New Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca website, and Stay Safer pages launch online on gov.bc.ca  Material distribution (community orgs, health authorities, etc.)	<b>Status:</b> Proposed <b>Lead:</b> Partnerships and engagement team (Wellbeing), GCPE GDX (gov.bc.ca)	
FEBRUARY 2023			
s.13			
JANUARY 2024			
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### **SECTION B:** Draft News Release

Decriminalization of possession of certain substances for personal use comes into effect in B.C.

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- Since 2017, the Government of Canada has committed more than \$800 million to address the opioid overdose crisis and responded quickly to implement a wide range of measures to help save lives and meet the diverse needs of people who use drugs.

A Pathway to Hope: [https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BCMentalHealthRoadmap\\_2019.pdf](https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BCMentalHealthRoadmap_2019.pdf)

Stop Overdose BC: [StopOverdoseBC.ca](http://StopOverdoseBC.ca)

### **Contact:**

Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions  
Communications  
250 880-2378 (media line)

Health Canada  
Media Relations  
613-957-2983  
[media@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:media@hc-sc.gc.ca)

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Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)

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### SECTION C: Digital Communications

## Organic digital strategy for the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain illegal substances for personal use

#### Goals and Objectives

- Created a landing page on [gov.bc.ca/decriminalization](http://gov.bc.ca/decriminalization) for information related to the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain illegal substances for diverse audiences.
- Produce plain language social media posts and graphic assets which meet the overall communications objectives of this plan, including:
  - Increase knowledge and understanding of the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain substances;
  - Reduce the stigma, often aimed at people who use drugs;
  - Promote mental health and substance use supports, including harm reduction programs and other relevant services.
    - Content could include information on how families can talk to their kids about the exemption and substance use.
  - Continued messaging on the danger of the illegal drug supply.
  - Overdose prevention messaging.
  - Messaging targeted at youth.
- Work with the federal government to ensure messaging is between provincial and federal websites about the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain illegal substances, such as including a link to HC's page on provincial page.
- Through community management response, have conversations about the exemption, answer questions, and share information to help change the perception of the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain substances and reduce the stigma towards people who use drugs.
- Provide content for Minister and MLAs to share with their audiences.

#### Calls to Action

- Encourage people to learn more at [gov.bc.ca/decriminalization](http://gov.bc.ca/decriminalization)
- Stop the stigma campaign - encourages people to have open conversations with their friends, family member or loved ones about substance use ([StopOverdoseBC.ca](http://StopOverdoseBC.ca)).

#### Duration

- TBC until March 2023.

#### Tags

- #DrugDecriminalization

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- #StopOverdose
- #StopTheStigma

### Proposed schedule

- Sunday, November 20-Saturday, November 26 – National Addictions Awareness Week
  - a post reminding people about the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain illicit drugs for personal use in B.C. and how it reduces stigma around drug use.
  - messaging about the increasingly toxic drug supply and risks associated with that.
- December 2022, particularly around the holidays
  - at least one post about available mental health supports for different audiences (e.g. adults, youth, post-secondary students)
  - at least one on reducing stigma and having open conversations with their friends and family.
- Tuesday, January 31, 2023
  - a post explaining that the exemption to decriminalize possession of certain substances is in effect, and what that means for British Columbians.
- February 2023
  - Post about how the exemption helps to reduce stigma so that people can connect to supports more easily.

### Sample content

The following content was posted on May 31, 2022, when the application for decriminalization was first announced. This provides a close example of how content can aim to increase knowledge and understanding of decriminalization and reduce the stigma.

### POST COPY

Stigma about drug use and addiction drives people to hide their drug use and use alone, which can be fatal.

BC is taking the next steps toward decriminalizing personal possession of small amounts of certain illicit substances, so that we can reduce the fear and shame associated with substance use – making it clear that substance use is a public health issue, not a criminal one.

Learn more: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/overdose/decriminalization> (link in bio)

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DRAFT POST #1

Decriminalization is a powerful tool in the fight against stigma surrounding substance use. Starting on Jan. 31, 2023, adults aged 18 and over who possess 2.5g or less of certain illicit drugs for personal use will no longer face criminal charges. BC will be the first province to take this important step to treat substance use like a health issue, not a criminal justice one. Learn more about the steps we are taking to prepare for this change: [gov.bc.ca/decriminalization](https://gov.bc.ca/decriminalization)



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### DRAFT POST #2

Fear and stigma around drug use keeps people from asking for help and accessing the treatment and health care they need. Addiction needs to be treated as a health care issue, not a criminal one. Starting Jan. 31, 2023, adults aged 18 and over who possess 2.5g or less of certain illicit drugs for personal use will no longer face criminal charges in BC. Learn more: [gov.bc.ca/decriminalization](https://gov.bc.ca/decriminalization)

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DRAFT POST #3

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easier for people to get treatment and access harm reduction services. Learn more:  
[gov.bc.ca/decriminalization](https://gov.bc.ca/decriminalization)

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### **Analytics & Insights**

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- 3 livestreams (broadcast on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter)
- 3 image+text graphics (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- 1 Humans of BC photo (a first-person story published on Facebook and Instagram)
- 1 carousel (an album of text graphics posted on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

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**Engagements** are interactions with a post. These include likes, comments, shares, and more. The decriminalization posts received fewer engagements than average on Facebook, about average on Twitter, and much higher than average on Instagram.

**Reach** is the number of people who see a post. Twitter shares Impressions, which are the number of times a post is seen. The decriminalization posts had lower reach than average on Facebook, and higher than average on Twitter and Instagram.

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### SECTION D: Paid advertising campaign



## GCPE MARKETING BRIEF

### DECRIMINALIZATION PUBLIC AWARENESS STRATEGY

WINTER 2023

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Demonstrate government is urgently responding to ongoing toxic drug crisis and tackling escalating mental health and substance use concerns throughout the province.

#### CAMPAIGN GOALS

1. Raise public awareness and ensure understanding of exemption to decriminalize personal possession of certain illegal drugs in British Columbia
2. Update British Columbians on mental health and substance use services available throughout the province – identify new connections/pathways to care
3. Demonstrate government's actions to tackle toxic drug crisis

#### BACKGROUND:

Drug toxicity is now the leading cause of death amongst British Columbians aged 19 to 39, and the second leading cause of death overall. Since the declaration of the public health emergency in April of 2016, more than 10,000 British Columbians have died from illicit drug toxicity.

On November 1, 2021 B.C. became the first province in Canada to seek an exemption from Health Canada under subsection 56(1) of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA) for adults (18 years of age and older) in the province to possess small amounts of certain illegal substances for personal use.

On May 31, 2022, Health Canada granted B.C.'s request for an exemption, which will be in effect from January 31, 2023 to Jan. 31, 2026.

Audience research conducted in Fall 2022 showed that people living across the province were uncertain about government's investments in mental health and substance use services. This research also demonstrated that there is a desire to learn more about an overall approach, not just decriminalization.

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### STRATEGIC APPROACH

**Paid Content** - *Stop the Stigma* marketing campaign through October – November.

A SEM and SEO strategy will launch in January to address the requirement by Health Canada to inform and educate the public on the exemption and ongoing risks related to the toxic illegal drug supply. The strategy will help drive people to three government websites (listed below under owned assets).

Opportunity to layer in digital ads to drive people to the appropriate Government of BC website, including Wellbeing, to ensure people are finding accurate information about decriminalization and mental health and substance use services.

**Owned Content** – three assets available to help inform and answer questions on exemption and addictions resources (*more information in Appendix*):

1. [Gov.bc.ca/decriminalization](https://gov.bc.ca/decriminalization) website updated with key facts and information on exemption, including exemption's scope, date it comes into effect and duration.
2. [Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca](https://wellbeing.gov.bc.ca) will provide information on mental health and addictions resources and services in British Columbia.
3. [StopOverdose.gov.bc.ca](https://stopoverdose.gov.bc.ca) will provide people with information on stigma and advice on how to talk about addictions as a health care issue.

**Shared Content** - digital content developed for government, MLA and Minister social channels with a focus informing public on implementation of exemption and mental health and substance use services available throughout the province.

**Earned Media** – pre-implementation news release planned for early December inform public on the work underway to prepare for January 31<sup>st</sup>, scope of exemption and commitment to monitor and evaluate any unintended consequences.

A second media event and technical briefing will be planned for January 30<sup>th</sup> for federal and provincial ministers of mental health and addictions to announce implementation.

### KEY MESSAGES – OVERALL:

- Drug use is a public health matter – not a criminal justice one.
- Criminalization drives people to hide their drug use and use alone – this can be deadly
- We are decriminalizing people who use drugs to break down the barriers that prevent people from getting help.
- This is not legalization.
- Reducing stigma around drug use is a vital part of B.C.'s work to end the toxic drug crisis and get more people the support they need.



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### TARGET AUDIENCES:

- General public
  - People who may be generally supportive of the concept of decriminalization, although they may not be clear on what it means.
- People with lived experience
  - Families, caregivers and loved ones of those with lived experience
- Young people
  - Decriminalization does not apply to people under 18
- Other levels of government, stakeholders and government partners

### RECOMMENDED CAMPAIGN TACTICS:

Search Marketing

Search Engine Optimization

Wellbeing Digital Ads

### SCHEDULE:

SEO/ SEM Strategy – mid-January (TBD)

Earned media event for decriminalization (Minister's Announcement) – January 31<sup>st</sup>

Wellbeing Digital Ads – February (TBD)

### CAMPAIGN MEASUREMENT:

- TBD

### ESTIMATED COSTS:

#### *Subject to change*

All costs are estimates only. A detailed breakdown will be made available once the project and its campaign elements are complete. The actual spend will be released with Public Accounts.

Activity	Budget Estimate

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<b>Total</b>	

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### APPENDIX

Owned Channel Strategy		
Gov.bc.ca/Decriminalization		
Content	Audience	Marketing
Source of truth on behalf of provincial government related to decriminalization, including technical details such as information about which drugs are included in the exemption and how the exemption is applied in a variety settings. This page will also include links to resources for stakeholder groups such as “fact sheets”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gen pop</li> <li>▪ Stakeholders looking for specific details about the exemption</li> </ul>	Search engine optimization and marketing (SEO, SEM) to drive traffic related to decriminalization
Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca		
Content	Audience	Marketing
Content plan responsive to audience research, focused on topics such as increased drug use among youth population, “normalizing” drug use in the context of a toxic drug crisis and how to find mental health and substance use supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gen pop</li> <li>▪ Concerned parents/ caregivers</li> <li>▪ People who are at risk of toxic drug injuries or death</li> <li>▪ People looking for mental health and substance use services</li> </ul>	SEO/ SEM (searches related to increased drug use/ supply, how to stay safer, mental health and substance use services/ help-seeking), digital advertising
StopOverdoseBC.ca		
Content	Audience	Marketing
Landing page for Stop the Stigma campaign, building public awareness that addiction is a medical condition and not a choice. Resources for families and supporters to stay connected and stay informed. Integrated content related to decriminalization throughout the site, highlighted on facts carousals on landing page and throughout site in a variety of ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gen pop</li> <li>▪ Families, caregivers</li> </ul>	Province-wide campaign (Fall 2022), SEO to drive traffic related to stigma, addiction and harm reduction (TBD)

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### SECTION E: Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder/ Audience	Rationale: Why targeted approach is required	Interests/concerns to be addressed	Strategy/ Channel
PWLLE / PWUD	Most impacted group in terms of criminalization and negative interactions with law enforcement	What will and won't change with the exemption (e.g. what kind of possession is protected) Voluntary nature of referrals PWLLE rights What can't be addressed through exemption (e.g. safe supply) Why police are involved in implementing decriminalization There is still risks associated with using drugs / the drug supply continues to be toxic	Informational materials delivered through treatment and harm reduction services, Health Authority websites, and peer/social service organizations.  Resource cards will be distributed by law enforcement.
Chinese community/Mandarin and Cantonese media outlets	Unique cultural attitudes toward substance use	Stigma, misinformation about	Informational materials such as news releases, website pages, social media posts will be available in traditional and simplified Chinese.
South Asian community/Punjabi media outlet	Unique cultural attitudes toward substance use	Stigma	Informational materials such as news releases, website pages and social media posts will be available in Punjabi.
Municipalities	Bylaw authority regarding public use	Harms of restricting public use Exceptions to the exemption (e.g., public transit)	Pre-conference workshop will be conducted with municipalities at UBCM.  Joint-MMHA/UBCM Local Government Decrim Working Group  UBCM Compass Newsletter, which reaches every local government in BC.

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Business Associations	Public use within or in vicinity of businesses	What is and isn't allowed within vicinity of businesses or on premises (e.g. washrooms)	Information available on Gov.bc.ca/decrim FAQ  Provincial engagement with BIA's (e.g., townhalls).
Youth-invested stakeholders (parents, educators)	Exemption doesn't apply to youth under 18 or on school/childcare facility premises	Exceptions for schools, childcare facilities What will and won't change for youth in possession (exemption doesn't apply) Concerns that decrim condones substance use Exemption alongside school policies Alternatives to criminal penalties	Information available on Gov.bc.ca/decriminalization  Additional strategies to be identified through engagement with BCCSU Youth Advisory Committee  Communication with school districts, such as info bulletins, regarding exceptions to the exemption and other relevant info.  s.13

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Metis communities	DRIPA commitments Disproportionate impact of drug toxicity crisis and incarceration on Indigenous Peoples Availability of culturally appropriate services as alternative pathways	How decriminalization will impact racism and relations with law enforcement Inclusion of Indigenous justice programs and culturally appropriate health services	One townhall complete, with follow up sessions scheduled.  Collaboration with MNBC on additional strategies for communication/engagement.
Urban Indigenous population	Exemption alongside Indigenous justice programs DRIPA commitments Disproportionate impact of drug toxicity crisis and incarceration on Indigenous Peoples Availability of culturally appropriate services as alternative pathways	How decriminalization will impact racism and relations with law enforcement Inclusion of Indigenous justice programs and culturally appropriate health services	Health Authority websites  Collaboration with FNHA and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres on additional strategies to reach urban Indigenous population
Health authority staff	Exemption alongside health authority policies regarding drug possession/consumption	How decriminalization will impact health authority policies regarding drug possession/consumption	Working groups, community of practice for HA decriminalization project managers.
Police	Primary role in implementing decriminalization Enforcement of CDSA History of negative interactions with marginalized groups Changes from de facto decriminalization that exists in some communities	Concerns that decriminalization promotes substance use Culture shift away from substance use as criminal justice issue Impacts on marginalized communities	BC to offer training programs for law enforcement on how to implement decriminalization in the months leading up to Jan. 31, 2023 and after.
Ports of entry/border services/travellers	Exemption not applicable at borders or ports of entry (airports, seaports) Concerns around drug tourism Travellers may be unfamiliar with BC's laws and policies	Whether travellers can have drugs in these locations or transport them across borders Whether travellers are subject to the exemption once in BC (outside of ports of entry/airports)	BC to work in collaboration with Canada Border Services Agency, Transport Canada as required. Possible signage/public messaging.

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Employers	Exemption alongside employer policies on drug consumption/possession	Exemption alongside employer policies on drug consumption/possession	Close collaboration with WorkSafeBC to disseminate key messages
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Newcomers (immigrants, refugees, international students, temporary foreign workers)	Unfamiliar with BC's laws and policies Impact on legal status in BC	Will possession at or below the 2.5g threshold impact the legal status of these individuals even if they are not arrested and charged?	Information available on Gov.bc.ca/deccrim  Translations will also be available.
Recovery sector	Many treatment and recovery facilities have sober/"zero tolerance" policies	Exemption alongside facility policies on drug consumption/possession Whether private treatment and recovery facilities will be included in referral pathways	Existing working groups, and ongoing meeting with key stakeholders in the recovery sector.

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LGBTQ2S+ communities	LGBTQ2S+ have history of mistrust in law enforcement and unique needs regarding substance use messaging.	How decriminalization will impact discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ communities and improve health equity	Continue to work with organizations serving and representing LGBTQ2S+ communities to refine communications and strategies to reach the community with information about decriminalization.
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### Section F: Public Opinion Research

#### Public Opinion Research:

#### Stigma Reduction Campaign and other Priority Initiatives

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#### Survey questions (DRAFT)

##### Goals:

- Assess effectiveness of *Stop the Stigma* campaign following Spring 2022 wave (May–July) and Fall 2022 wave (Oct–Nov).
  - Establish baseline of how people understand BC’s exemption to decriminalize certain illicit substances (*will be revisited to assess effectiveness of communications activities*)
- 

##### Audience:

- 1,500 British Columbia Adults Age 19+
- Balanced by BC age, gender, and region

#### INTRODUCTION & SCREENING QUESTIONS

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey is about your attitudes and beliefs relating to issues that British Columbians are facing. and should take approximately 14 minutes to complete.

- A1. To begin, in what year were you born?  
*Choose one.*

[DROP DOWN BOX 1931-2000]

[TERMINATE IF UNDER AGE OF 19]

- A2. What is your gender identity?  
*Choose one.*

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Man  
Woman  
Non-binary  
Two Spirited  
Other term you prefer (specify)  
Prefer not to answer

A3. Which of the following best describes where you live?

*Choose one.*

[COASTAL] Vancouver

[COASTAL] North Shore (North/West Vancouver/Lion's Bay)

[FRASER] Burnaby/ New Westminster

[COASTAL] Richmond

[FRASER] North Delta/ Tsawwassen/ Ladner

[FRASER] Surrey/ White Rock

[FRASER] Langley/ Fort Langley

Coquitlam/ Port Coquitlam/ Port Moody/ Pitt Meadows/ Maple Ridge

[FRASER] **Fraser Valley** (e.g., Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Hope, Kent, Mission, etc.)

[COASTAL] **Whistler/ Squamish/ Sunshine Coast/ Central and South Coast** (e.g., Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton, Powell River, Sechelt, Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Gibsons, Ocean Falls etc.)

[ISLAND] **Vancouver Island**

[INTERIOR] **Okanagan-Similkameen/Thompson Nicola** (e.g., 100 Mile House, Armstrong, Cache Creek, Chase, Enderby, Hedley, Kamloops, Kelowna, Keremeos, Lumby, Manning Park, Merritt, Osoyoos, Oliver, Peachland, Penticton, Princeton, Salmon Arm, Sicamous, Summerland, Vernon, Williams Lake, etc.)

[INTERIOR] **Kootenays** (e.g., Castlegar, Cranbrook, Creston, Fernie, Fruitvale, Golden, Grand Forks, Invermere, Kaslo, Kimberley, Nakusp, Nelson, New Denver, Radium Hot Springs, Revelstoke, Rossland, Salmo, Sparwood, Trail, etc.)

[NORTHERN] **Northern BC** (e.g., Burns Lake, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, Fort St. James, Fort St. John, Kitimat, Haida Gwaii, Houston, McBride, MacKenzie, New Hazelton, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Stewart, Tumbler Ridge, Terrace, Valemount, Vanderhoof, etc.)

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### General Sentiment Questions

#### [SINGLE CHOICE]

- G1.** Overall, thinking about the way things are going these days in British Columbia, to what extent would you say that the province as a whole is on the right track, or the wrong track?

- 1 – B.C. is on the right track
- 2
- 3
- 4 – B.C. is on the wrong track

#### [SINGLE CHOICE]

- G2.** What about the current B.C. provincial government? To what extent is it on the right track or the wrong track overall?

- 1 – The B.C. Government is on the right track
- 2
- 3
- 4 – The B.C. Government is on the wrong track

- G3.** On a scale of 1 to 5 where “1” means not at all important and “5” means extremely important, how important is it to you, personally, that the BC government do each of the following things?

*Choose one for each row.*

#### [COLUMNS]

- 1 – Not at all important
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – Extremely important

#### [ROWS] [RANDOMIZE]

Reduce overdose deaths

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Responsibly manage the province's finances  
Improve elementary and secondary education  
Grow the economy and create jobs  
Protect the environment and address climate change  
Improve health care  
Make life more affordable for British Columbians  
Work towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples  
Make housing more affordable and available  
Improve access to childcare  
Make communities safer

**G4.** What would you say are the two most important issues facing British Columbia today?

*Select two from the list below.*

[RANDOMIZE]

Economy  
Jobs / unemployment  
Housing prices /affordability  
Primary care/family doctors  
Mental health supports (*new*)  
Education  
Cost of living / affordability  
Pipelines – getting them built [RANDOMIZE WITH STATEMENT BELOW]  
Pipelines – stopping new ones [RANDOMIZE WITH STATEMENT ABOVE]  
Environment / climate change / global warming  
Transportation (transit, roads and congestion)  
Taxes  
Childcare  
Poverty  
Homelessness

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Addiction / toxic drug crisis

Car insurance / ICBC

Public safety / crime

Low wages

Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

Other (Specify) **[ANCHOR]**

Don't know **[ANCHOR]**

### BASIC TOXIC DRUG CRISIS AWARENESS

- B1. How concerned are you about the impact of the toxic drug crisis (sometimes referred to as the overdose crisis) on...?

*Choose one for each row.*

#### **[ROWS]**

Your personal network of family and friends

Your community

The province of B.C.

#### **[COLUMNS]**

Very concerned

Somewhat concerned

Not very concerned

Not concerned at all

- B2. How much do you agree or disagree that the B.C. Government is doing enough to address the toxic drug crisis in the province?

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Undecided

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Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

B3. Do you believe the following statements to be true or false?

*Choose one answer per statement.*

### [ROWS – RANDOMIZE]

1. There are a high number of deaths due to toxic drugs in B.C.
2. Illicit drugs in B.C. are more toxic than ever and are causing more deaths
3. A person will not be arrested for simple drug possession if they call 9-1-1 in case of a suspected overdose
4. People who overdose mainly do so indoors
5. The police do not arrest people for simple drug possession anymore
6. Men, especially men who work in the trades, are disproportionately impacted by the toxic drug crisis *(new)*
7. Using drugs alone is a big risk for overdose death
8. Indigenous people and people of colour are disproportionately impacted by the overdose crisis

### [COLUMNS]

I am certain it is true

I think it is true, but am not certain

I think it is false, but am not certain

I am certain it is false

B4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about people who use drugs?

*Choose one answer per statement.*

### [ROWS – RANDOMIZE]

1. People who use drugs have made poor choices
2. People who use drugs should expect consequences for their actions
3. People should just stop using drugs if they know the drugs can kill them
4. People use drugs because they have experienced trauma or are in physical pain
5. People who use drugs are mainly homeless, poor and unemployed
6. People who use drugs could be people who live next door, people I work with, or in my family
7. People who use drugs can contribute to society in productive ways
8. People with substance use-related issues are facing a health issue
9. People who use drugs should face criminal penalties *(new)*
10. People who use drugs should be required to enter treatment/recovery *(new)*

### [COLUMNS]

Strongly agree

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Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly disagree

### ATTITUDES ABOUT HARM REDUCTION, OVERDOSE RESPONSE, AND ADDICTION TREATMENT

- C1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about harm reduction strategies, overdose responses, and addiction treatment?

*Choose one answer per statement.*

#### [ROWS- RANDOMIZE]

1. I know how to recognize the signs of an overdose
2. I know where to get a naloxone kit
3. I would call 9-1-1 if I thought I was seeing someone having an overdose in public
4. I know how to respond to an overdose if I encounter one
5. I know where to find information on overdose prevention and response
6. Supervised consumption services and overdose prevention services save lives
7. People who use drugs should have access to the same health care services as I do
8. I believe the government should remove criminal sanctions against people who use drugs
9. I believe the government should make safer (i.e., pharmaceutical grade) drugs available by prescription to people who use street drugs to help separate them from the highly toxic and unpredictable supply to reduce the risk of overdose

#### [COLUMNS]

Strongly agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly disagree

- C2. If you wanted to find information about mental health and substance use services in B.C., what would you do?

*Select all that apply.*

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1. Call 8-1-1
2. Talk to a doctor
3. Google search
4. Visit a B.C. Government website
5. Other [SPECIFY]
6. I don't know

### ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDING AROUND DECRIMINALIZATION

D0. *Lead in Q related to awareness of upcoming changes to B.C. decriminalization.... Allan to draft.*

- D1. Do you believe the following statements to be true or false as it relates to B.C.'s upcoming drug decriminalization policy?

*Choose one answer per statement.*

#### [ROWS – RANDOMIZE]

1. Decriminalization and legalization are the same thing
2. Decriminalization will not apply to youth under 18 years
3. Drug trafficking and related offences will remain illegal
4. Adults will still be prohibited from possessing illicit substances on school properties, or the property of licensed childcare facilities
5. People who use drugs will not have their drugs seized or face fines or administrative penalties. Some exceptions apply. Instead, they will be offered information about voluntary health and social supports
6. Decriminalization applies to all illicit drugs
7. Illicit drugs would be sold in regulated stores (like cannabis or alcohol)

#### [COLUMNS]

I am certain it is true  
I think it is true, but am not certain  
I think it is false, but am not certain  
I am certain it is false

- D2. Beginning January 31, 2023, British Columbia will decriminalize the possession of small amounts of *certain* illegal drugs (opioids, cocaine, methamphetamines and MDMA) for personal use. Under the policy change, adults (18+) in possession of less than 2.5 grams of drugs for personal use, would not have their drugs seized, and would not be subject to arrest, charges, or fines.



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Some exceptions apply. Instead, individuals would be provided with information about health services available to them. Selling drugs (trafficking) will remain illegal. Drug decriminalization is one part of BC's comprehensive approach to saving lives that also includes expanding access to health care, treatment, and social services.

### How much do you agree or disagree with BC's approach to decriminalization?

Strongly agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly disagree

- D3. Which of the following statements best aligns with how you feel about charging people who possess street drugs **for their own personal use**?

#### [ROWS – DO NOT RANDOMIZE]

1. People who possess street drugs for their own personal use **should be arrested and charged with a crime.**
  2. People who possess street drugs for their own personal use **should be ticketed and fined**, but not be subject to criminal charges.
  3. People who possess street drugs for their own personal use **should not be subject to criminal charges or tickets and fines.**
- D4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the **decriminalization** of drugs?

#### [ROWS – RANDOMIZE]

1. The fear of criminal penalties makes people hide their drug use and not reach out for help
2. Decriminalizing certain drugs will make people who use drugs do so in greater quantity or frequency
3. Decriminalization will reduce the stigma that prevents people who use drugs from seeking care and life-saving services
4. Decriminalization will make more people experiment with or use drugs for the first time
5. Decriminalization is an important step to support people and protect communities
6. Decriminalization will help people who use drugs access services and supports, like treatment and recovery or harm reduction

#### [COLUMNS]

Strongly agree

Agree

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Undecided

Disagree

Strongly disagree

D5. Below are a series of messages related to drug decriminalization. For each message, please indicate how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement

- Addiction is a public health matter – not a criminal justice one
- Criminalization drives people to hide their drug use and often use alone. Given the increasingly toxic drug supply – using alone can be fatal
- The federal government has approved an exemption so that adults 18+ in BC will not be subject to criminal charges for possession of certain illicit drugs for personal use  
This will help break down the barriers that prevent people from getting support and create new pathways to life-saving services
- This exemption to decriminalize certain substances is not legalization. Drug trafficking and drug-related offences will remain illegal
- Reducing stigma around drug use is a vital part of B.C.'s work to build a comprehensive system of mental health and substance use care for people throughout the province

[SHOW STATEMENTS ONE AT A TIME ON SCREEN IN BOLD TEXT OF DIFFERENT COLOUR TO STAND OUT]

E1a. The message fits with what you currently believe

E1b. The message is easy to understand

E1c. The message is important to share with the BC population

E1d. The BC Government would be a credible sponsor of this message

[COLUMNS]

Strongly agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly disagree

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### GCPE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

E1. Have you, or someone close to you ever been impacted by the toxic drug crisis?

You/ yourself

A family member

A friend

None **[EXCLUSIVE]**

E2. Have you, or someone close to you tried to access the following types of services over the past year?

#### **Mental health services**

I have tried to access

Someone I know has tried to access

No

#### **Substance use or addiction services**

I have tried to access

Someone I know has tried to access

No

E3. Hypothetically, how comfortable would you be having sites built in your neighbourhood where people and can access harm reduction services

#### **[COLUMNS]**

Very comfortable

Comfortable

Not very comfortable

Not at all comfortable

### Stop the Stigma Campaign Effectiveness

F1. Where have you seen or heard information about the toxic drug crisis?

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*Check all that apply.*

**[RANDOMIZE]**

- a) On billboards in public spaces
- b) On bus shelters
- c) In trains or buses
- d) On TV
- e) On the radio
- f) In the newspaper
- g) In washrooms of restaurants or bars
- h) At health centres or hospitals
- i) At colleges or universities
- j) At community organization/groups
- k) At fire stations or emergency services
- l) At government offices
- m) On Facebook
- n) On Twitter
- o) On Instagram
- p) On YouTube
- q) On B.C. Government websites
- r) On health authority websites
- s) Other social media (please list) **[ANCHOR]**
- t) Other not listed (please list) **[ANCHOR]**
- u) I have not seen any information about the overdose crisis **[ANCHOR]**

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R0. For the next set of questions, we would like to know if you have seen or heard some ads recently. Please make sure that your volume is turned on so that you can hear the ads correctly.

R1a. Please click on the ad below when you are ready to watch. You will need to watch the full ad before continuing.

*INSERT 30s timer*

TV spot: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSpArk3M\\_Q8&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSpArk3M_Q8&t=2s)

Have you seen or heard this ad, or a shorter version of it, before today?

Yes  
No

**[IF YES, SKIP TO R2]**

R2. We would now like you to listen to an audio ad you may have heard while listening to the radio, streaming audio or podcasts.

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Please click on the ad below when you are ready to listen. You will need to listen to the full ad before continuing.

INSERT 30s timer

[INSERT RADIO AD BELOW]

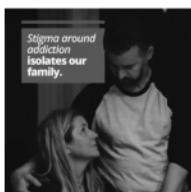
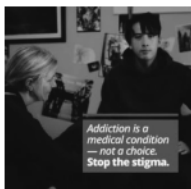
Have you heard this ad, before today?

Yes, on my phone or computer

No

I wasn't able to hear the ad

- R3. We would now like to get your thoughts on some advertising you might have seen recently. Have you seen any of these ads (or a version of these ads) before today? Please note that they may have appeared in different shapes and sizes depending on where you saw the ad.



Yes

No

[IF YES @R2]

## COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

December 2022

R3b. Where do you remember seeing or hearing these ads?

*Please select all that apply.*

RANDOMIZE

In an online ad

On Facebook

On Instagram

On YouTube

In a sports arena

On a billboard or a bus shelter

Through friends/family

Other (please specify)

Don't know [EXCLUSIVE]

R4. After seeing or hearing these ads, how likely would you be to visit the website [stopoverdose.bc.ca](http://stopoverdose.bc.ca) to learn more?

Very likely

Somewhat likely

Somewhat unlikely

Very unlikely

I don't know

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Q1: Do you identify as an Indigenous person? (i.e., First Nations, Métis or Inuit)

Yes

No

[IF YES, ASK Q2/Q3/Q4]

[IF NO, SKIP TO X1]

## COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

December 2022

Q2: Are you...

First Nations

Métis

Inuit

Q4: If you identify as a First Nations individual, do you live in a First Nations community (on-reserve)?

Yes

No

### [DO NOT ASK X1 IF SAID YES @Q1]

X1. The next question refers to the ethnic origins of your ancestors, from both sides of your family. Ethnic ancestry refers to your roots or cultural background and should not be confused with citizenship or nationality. Which of the following best describes you? Choose all that apply.

#### [DO NOT RANDOMIZE]

First Nations/Aboriginal/Metis/Inuit

White

Black

Chinese

Other Asian (Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, etc.)

South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, etc.)

European

Latin American (Mexican, Central American, South American, etc.)

Middle Eastern (Lebanese, Iranian, Armenian, etc.)

Prefer not to answer [EXCLUSIVE]

Other (please specify) [TEXT BOX]

X2. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Choose one.

High school graduation or less

Some tradeschool

Graduated from trade school

Some college / university

University or college undergraduate degree, such as a bachelor's degree

University or college graduate degree, such as a master's or PhD

Prefer not to answer

X3. Finally, for classification purposes only, which of the following ranges best describes your total annual household income before taxes? Choose one.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

*December 2022*

Less than \$35,000  
\$35,000 to less than \$45,000  
\$45,000 to less than \$55,000  
\$55,000 to less than \$65,000  
\$65,000 to less than \$75,000  
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000  
\$100,000 to less than \$125,000  
\$125,000 to less than \$150,000  
\$150,000 or more  
Prefer not to answer





JUNE 2022

# Considerations for Education Professionals

EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES

INTENDED FOR:

School Counsellors,  
Administrators and Other K-12  
Education Professionals

# Intro to this Resource

This set of resources is for education professionals looking to build their understanding of youth substance use. It offers basic insights to support education professionals in effectively connecting students to appropriate services.

Substance use is complex. We invite the reader to explore the links to additional reference materials we provide within these resources.

- [Adolescent Development and Substance Use](#) - understand the pattern of adolescent substance use and approaches to consider when supporting youth
- [Considerations for Education Professionals](#) - what classroom teachers, school counsellors and administrators can do to support students while connecting them to services
- [Substance Use Services and Supports for Youth and Their Families](#) - outlines what specific supports and locations of services

The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance use education in BC schools. Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

# EVIDENCE-BASED CONSIDERATIONS

A small percentage (estimated 10-15%) of youth will develop problems with substance use, whether it arises from singular/ occasional use, regular use, or frequent and heavy use.

Educators spend a lot of time with their students and are often the first to suspect or recognize substance-related concerns. These adults are well-positioned to recognize early substance use and can guide students to specialized support as needed.



# General Considerations

Below are some general considerations for educators aware of an adolescent who may need professional substance use counselling or treatment



## Use a non-judgmental approach.

For all youth, especially those at higher risk of harm, it is essential that teachers, counsellors and administrators use positive, non-judgmental approaches. Judging or pathologizing substance use (treating it as abnormal or unhealthy) can be stigmatizing. It also creates harm and can drive behaviour underground, causing it to become more entrenched. School personnel should understand that substance use that becomes problematic is a health issue, and they should find ways to support positive development and keep youth safe instead of punishing them.



## Maintain a positive relationship.

Youth using substances may not seek or welcome support for reducing or stopping their use. The most important thing an adult can do is maintain their relationship with the youth. Let the youth know you support them and believe in them. This is more vital than pressuring the student to seek counselling or treatment.



## Focus on the person, not their behaviour.

Youth who use in increasing frequency and greater amounts commonly see no problem with the behaviour and believe they “can quit anytime” if they want to. By focusing on the person and the outcomes of the substance use rather than the substance use per se, you convey an open, supportive, curious approach, which can help motivate a youth to consider change.



## Consider their readiness for change.

It is important to start where the youth is at and consider their readiness level. An effective way to do this is to informally assess where you perceive the student is on the “Stages of Change” spectrum. Each stage requires a distinct approach. For instance, how an adult approaches a student in the pre-contemplative stage will differ significantly from how to relate to a student in the contemplation stage.

## Learn more about the stages of the change spectrum:

- [Very Well Mind. The Stages of Change Model of Overcoming Addiction](#)
- [Social Work Tech - the Cycle of Change](#)
- [University of Rhode Island - Transtheoretical Model](#)

# What Classroom Teachers Can Do



**Teachers play a vital role in building up protective factors and connecting with students to help reduce stress, promote connectedness, and create open and safe environments for help-seeking. It is not the role of teachers to intervene specifically regarding substance use behaviours unless they have specific training in that area. Instead, teachers can:**

- Watch for indicators of substance use behaviours and caringly seek to connect the student to their grade counsellor. Learn more here:
  - [Beyond health education: Preventing problematic substance use by enhancing students' well-being](#)
  - [Resources for preventing substance use and related harms among youth](#)
- Keep interested, supportive and non-judgmental regardless of their behaviour. Learn more [here](#).
- Keep in mind that there is much more to the student than their substance use. Let them know you see and care for the whole person.
- Be informed about and alert to early or escalating substance use indicators. Learn more here:
  - [Substance-related and addictive disorders](#)
  - [Factors that impact addiction and problematic substance use](#)
- Recognize that youth may need substance use support or treatment from a specialist to curb harmful use
- Bridge the youth to professional services by connecting them with their school counsellor, mental health/addictions specialist, or public health professionals; avoid directly addressing a student's problem substance use.

# What School Counsellors and Administrators Can Do



**When confronted with students who are demonstrating potentially harmful substance use, school counsellors and administrators should consider the following actions:**

- Prioritize maintaining connections with youth
- Consider the severity of the substance use and the student's level of readiness to explore what support/treatment is appropriate
- Seek to increase the adolescent's insight and awareness regarding substance use and motivation toward change
- Bridge the youth to specialized care.

## **Specific actions could include:**

- Actively continue your relationship with the student. Keep interested, supportive and non-judgmental regardless of their behaviour.
- Be informed about and alert to indicators of early or escalating substance use.
- Recognize that substance use support or treatment from a specialist may be needed to curb harmful use.
- Acquire a basic understanding of the nature and progression of problematic substance use. Learn more about [factors that impact addiction](#) and [substance use and addiction](#).
- Learn what resources and supports are available and how and who (counsellor, mental health or substance use specialist, public health nurse, etc.) can help connect the youth to appropriate services
- Keep in mind that adolescents are not small adults. Youth substance use progresses differently from adult use, and youth require specific youth-centred substance use interventions. Learn more from these resources on [adolescent substance use disorder treatment](#) and [awareness and engagement](#).
- Bridge the youth to professional services; avoid directly delving into addressing a student's problem substance use.
- Do not attempt a formal assessment, screening or diagnosis, recognizing that these are the responsibility of addictions professionals.
- Supporting someone presenting with a substance-related problem to help them get specialized services is a form of brief intervention. Access resources on this [here](#).

SEPTEMBER 2022



ABCs of  
Youth  
Substance  
Use

# Creating a Healthy School Environment



**EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES**

**INTENDED FOR:**  
All School Staff





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The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance use education in BC schools. Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.



# Intro to this Resource

Creating a positive social and physical environment is one of the four pillars of a Comprehensive School Health approach.

This resource explains the role of school climate in promoting youth wellbeing and preventing harms from substance use.

Resources may be added to this list. Have something to suggest? We'd love to hear from you at [\*\*hello@theabcs.ca\*\*](mailto:hello@theabcs.ca).

# What is a Healthy School Climate?

One of the key pillars of the Comprehensive School Health Approach is the social and physical environment, including the relationships among and between staff and students; school culture; buildings, grounds and recreation space in and around the school; and spaces designated to promote student safety and connectedness.

Educators may understand the social and physical environment of the school as the school climate. School climate refers to “the quality and character of school life”. School climate refers to “the overarching and pervasive norms, policies, relationships, and values that help define a school’s character”. The overall tone and feel of the school impact the social and emotional status of students, their learning and their physical safety and comfort.

*Figure. Pillars of a Comprehensive School Health Approach*



# How Does School Climate Relate to Substance Use?

***Why is the school environment important to substance use health promotion and prevention? How does school climate make a difference in preventing harms from substance use?***

If given the opportunity, people tend to gravitate towards “the good”, towards health, respect, care and dignity towards others. However, people shut down if they feel disrespected, not seen or heard, and unable to influence or contribute to change.

Adolescents are no different. The school environment has a big impact on which of the above scenarios unfolds. Positive, healthy school climates help ignite the natural tendency to move towards health, whereas controlling, punitive, rigid school climates foster defiance, distance, and disrespect. When it comes to substance use education and support, the school climate can greatly influence the outcomes of even the most promising program.

## An Example

Imagine that a student is caught using substances on school property and has to attend their school’s three-day substance use program. Let’s assume this is a progressive, evidence-based, safe program led by skilled, relatable youth addiction specialists.



Over three days, the student is invited to look at their goals and the role substance use plays in their lives, consider the impact of drug use on adolescent development, taught skills for managing or reducing their substance use, and offered other supports and services available for youth.

Many youths will flourish in a program such as this. However, the progress that the student may make in the program is quickly lost if the student returns to a school climate that is not aligned.



Efforts to control or punish certain student behaviours are understood to be ineffective. Schools with unwelcoming, fearful, rigid environments drive undesired behaviours underground and increase student-teacher conflicts. The student will do better in a non-stigmatizing school environment where school staff:

- strive to come alongside students to establish non-judgmental relationships
- offer youth the psychological freedom needed for them to consider their lives

- are available to support students when they reach out because they need or want it
- recognize that adolescence is a life-shaping and positive time of change,
- understand that youth often are confronted with major challenges (such as trauma, grief, chaotic home life, mental health challenges, feeling they don't belong, and more) from which substance use offers respite, and
- Understand that substance experimentation usually happens in the teen years.



In doing so, school staff convey an accepting, safe, environment where students feel welcome and understood. This in turn promotes young people's ability to manage their emotions and use their emerging prefrontal cortex to begin considering options, choices and ways to achieve their passions and goals.

# How to Create Healthy School Environments

The strategies described below have proven effective in increasing the extent to which students feel connected to school. These strategies are provided as guideposts for schools and districts interested in improving school connectedness.

- Provide professional learning and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.
- School leadership at all levels establishes structures and decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement, academic achievement, and staff empowerment.
- Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, counsellors, other staff, students, families, and communities.
- Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.
- Use effective teaching and learning methods & classroom management techniques to foster a positive learning environment.
- Learning is social: Provide students with emotional and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.

Source: [Healthy Schools BC](#)

## Here are some specific school community-based initiatives that create healthy school environments:

- Promote and expand the range of extra-curricular programming available to students, such as intramurals, events and clubs that reflect students' diverse interests and identities.
- Enable students to create and decorate safe, inviting and inclusive communal spaces within the school for their use during breaks or after-school activities.
- Facilitate opportunities for adults within the school community to serve as formal or informal mentors, providing youth with guidance, and social and emotional support.
- Implement social-emotional learning (SEL) programming (See more [here](#))

Here are examples of school-based harm reduction initiatives across the four components of the Comprehensive School Health framework.

- Display print materials ideally designed by students that feature harm reduction messaging in common spaces within the school (E.g. [this poster](#)).
- Provide information on where to get free naloxone kits and training.
- Teach signs of overdose and what to do in the event of an overdose.
- Disseminate information on how to access substance-use-related support and information including ways to cut back or use more safely.
- Install safe disposal containers that school community members can access to safely dispose of needles, razors, broken glass or other "sharps".





## Additional Resources:

- 1 [Public Health Agency of Canada. 2021. Blueprint for Action: Preventing substance-related harms among youth through a Comprehensive School Health approach](#)
- 2 [National School Climate Centre](#)
- 3 [Guide to Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning](#)
- 4 [University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2016. School Climate and Culture.](#)
- 5 [Island health. 2012. Keeping Youth Connected, Healthy, and Learning](#)
- 6 [Healthy Schools BC - School Connectedness and associated Action Guide](#)



# DECISION-MAKING TOOL:

## Supporting Educators in Selecting Mental Health and Substance Use Resources

### Overview

The Ministry of Education and Child Care **Decision-Making Tool: Supporting Educators in Selecting Mental Health and Substance Use Resources** was developed as an optional toolkit to support educators to identify appropriate, effective mental health and substance use resources for their learners. This tool aligns with the co-governance model for the B.C. K-12 education system, Learning Resources Policy, curriculum, First Peoples Principles of Learning, and the Mental Health in Schools (MHiS) Strategy.

Boards of Education are responsible for setting policies with respect to the use of learning resources. Mental health and substance use learning resources must align with local policies and the B.C. curriculum, be age-appropriate, and selected for use to support the delivery of a specific lesson, activity, or topic.

The decision-making tool includes four components to support the selection of mental health and substance use resources:

#### 1. Flowchart

- This diagram illustrates social considerations that are connected across five domains: capacity building; accessibility; mental health promotion; cultural inclusivity; diversity and inclusion. This component supports initial reflection when considering new resources.

#### 2. Definitions

- There are phrases and terminologies used in the checklist component which are defined to ensure a comprehensive/common understanding (**bold words** within the checklist will be defined in the definitions section).

#### 3. Checklist

- This checklist includes reflective questions to consider when selecting a resource type (print resources, videos, websites, and presenters).

#### 4. Support Plans

- These supplementary plans are intended to ensure planning/considerations are in place for debriefing activities and support for staff and learners, who may be impacted by their lived and living experiences in relation to the presenter/video/material. They also provide opportunity for reflection of ongoing learning and supports



# Decision-Making Circle: Supporting Educators in Selecting Resources and Presenters

How each domain is represented in the resource will impact its effectiveness on students and staff. Use this wheel to guide your resource selection using relevant domains to positively affect student learning.

## DOMAINS:

### Accessibility

- accessible in the district/school
- affordable
- a variety of formats for all learners to access
- ease of ability to find and interpret content
- supplementary materials are available for use
- age and development appropriateness
- strengthens school connectedness

### Mental Health Promotion

- ways students manage their health and environment
- ways students can identify supports for themselves and others
- ways illness can affect someone's life
- ideas to identify those who may require support
- develop new skills and abilities
- develop ideas on interdependence of health and education
- link mental health to core competencies

### Capacity Building

- a trauma-informed perspective that promotes empowerment and choice
- mental health literacy is apparent in available resources
- the development of social and emotional skills and competencies
- promote development of additional strategies for healthy living

Consider these domains when selecting a resource

### Diversity and Inclusion

- value for all life experiences
- strength for all identities
- empower change
- systemic non-discrimination
- provide voice for all students
- include data from all groups to ensure equity
- build community and collaboration
- create a climate of acceptance and understanding

### Cultural Safety

- trauma-informed practice to develop trust and knowledge
- strengths-based approaches to develop new understandings
- advocate for empowerment
- reduced stigma of mental health and marginalized groups
- culturally responsible data to authentically represent all learners

## Definitions

Phrases and terminologies in the decision-making tool checklist in bold are further defined to ensure a common context and understanding, which is critical from both an audience and resource perspective.

- **Appropriate for the cultural, emotional, and developmental level** – Consider the age/grade level, emotional maturity, and cultural perspectives of the audience to ensure the content meets their level of understanding.
- **Cultural humility** – A process of self-reflection to help understand personal and systemic biases and to develop respectful processes and relationships. It involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.
- **Cultural inclusivity** – This is fostering a climate where Indigenous Peoples and peoples of all cultures are recognized, respected, and reflected without discrimination. School connectedness is impacted by implicit bias and privilege, expectations, sense of belonging and identity, cultural relevance, Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, connection to communities, and many other factors.
- **Demographic of the audience** – Consider the cultures, family, disabilities/diverse abilities, age/grade levels, sexual orientation and gender identities, socioeconomic status of the audience as well as ensure that all these demographics are represented within the content. This will help learners see a version of themselves in the resource.
- **Intersectionality** – Acknowledges that different parts of our identities, such as race, disabilities/diverse abilities, sexual orientation, and gender identity shape the experiences for individuals and groups of people. Intersecting identities can create additional barriers or opportunities. Understanding intersectionality helps to identify and address different forces of discrimination that people experience.
- **Lived and living experiences** – Depending on the lived and living experiences of learners and staff, the content of the mental health resource may intensely impact and potentially distress them.
- **Strengths-based** – A strengths-based perspective is based on the belief that all learners, staff, and communities have strengths, resources, and the ability to recover from adversity. This perspective replaces an emphasis on problems, vulnerabilities, and deficits, while still acknowledging important individual and contextual risk and protective factors.
- **Timing of the presentation** – Avoid Mondays, Fridays, and late in the day, when possible, to allow for monitoring and follow-up after the content has been presented.
- **Trauma-informed** – A trauma-informed practice promotes inclusive and compassionate learning environments; understanding coping strategies; supporting independence; and addressing learners' potential to minimize additional stress or trauma. Trauma-informed systems aim to avoid retraumatizing learners and staff to support their safety, choice, and healing. Trauma-informed practices support all learners whether they have experienced trauma or not.
- **Young people with disabilities/diverse abilities** – A school-age learner with an intellectual, neurodevelopmental, psychological, physical, physiological, sensory, social/emotional, or behavioural impairment or with exceptional gifts and talents.

## Checklist

There are many considerations when one selects resources to support mental health and/or substance use resources. To provide a safe, supportive, empowering, and collaborative experience, resources and presenters need to be **trauma-informed and culturally inclusive**. The following checklist will provide decision-making guidance for selecting resources or presenters.

### Considerations applicable to all resource types and presenters

	N/A	✓	Notes
Have you consulted with the District Leads of Indigenous Education and/or local First Nations or Indigenous community?			
Have you thoroughly reviewed all the content to ensure the information is <b>appropriate for the cultural, emotional, and developmental level</b> of your learners?			
Have you considered <b>cultural humility</b> (yours, staff, presenter) and its impacts on the chosen resource?			
Does the resource contain accurate information, focus on reducing stigma, and promote help-seeking behaviours, while promoting <b>cultural inclusivity</b> ?			
Is the <b>demographic of the audience</b> represented within the resource?			
Have you reflected on the impact of <b>intersectionality</b> , and how the resource will be received by each of the individuals in the audience?			
Considering the sensitive nature of the content is there a plan in place for learners and staff impacted by the information/presentation, including those with <b>lived and living experiences</b> ?			

**Considerations applicable to all resource types and presenters (continued)**

	N/A	✓	Notes
Is the resource <b>strengths-based</b> , and does it provide this perspective throughout the resource?			
Is this resource accessible to all learners and considerate of <b>young people with disabilities/diverse abilities</b> ?			
Have you considered the <b>timing of the presentation</b> and allowed for a debriefing time with learners following the presentation?			
Is this resource <b>trauma-informed</b> and <b>culturally inclusive</b> ?			
Are there multi-language format options available?			
Have you considered having this resource vetted/reviewed by your school district Mental Health Lead(s) or another mental health professional, if one is available?			
Is the content of the material related to grade level curriculum for the learners?			
Is this resource readily available and accessible in your district and community?			
Have you considered sharing the content and purpose of this resource with parents/guardians?			
If you are unsure about the use of this resource, have you considered including your administration in the discussion around the content and purpose?			
Have you reviewed your district / school policy on learning resources? Does this align with the policies?			

## Print resources

	N/A	✓	Notes
Is the visual layout of the resource accessible to all learners?			
Are there alternative formats available to support the diversity of learning in your class?			

## Videos

	N/A	✓	Notes
Have you watched the full video to ensure content is aligned with the school district's vision for supporting and promoting mental health and substance use prevention?			
If needed, are there captions available for learners with hearing impairments, English language learners, etc.?			

## Websites/Online tools

	N/A	✓	Notes
Is the website/online tool user-friendly? Learner level appropriate?			
Does the website/online tool allow for the content to be exported?			
Does the website/online tool have the option of text-to-speech to support all learning styles?			
Does the website/online tool require supervision, or can it be self-directed learning?			

## Websites/Online tools

	N/A	✓	Notes
Does the website/online tool require additional supports or follow-up?			
Is the school equipped to provide access/devices to support web/online learning?			

## Presenters

	N/A	✓	Notes
Have you considered if the presenter recognizes the local context and community?			
Have you met with the presenter to discuss the presentation purpose, options, context, and audience? Are they a good fit?			
Have you confirmed the presenter's approach and understanding of the topic to ensure it aligns with policy, definitions, principles, and perspectives?			
Have you identified and connected with someone from the school district to support you with this presentation if needed?			
Have you considered the format and approach to ensure active, engaging, and appropriate interaction with the audience?			
Have you considered time for the audience to ask questions of the presenter?			
Have you discussed the length of the presentation and breaks with the presenter to support the needs of all learners?			
Have you considered whether the presentation materials, props, or equipment are safe, age-appropriate and accessible for the learning environment?			

## Support Plans

As considerations are checked off in the **Decision-Making Tool: Supporting Educators in Selecting Mental Health and Substance Use Resources**, there will be areas where additional planning/support is needed. This section provides space to think through a full-support plan.

### Support plan

Detail the plan for staff and learners who may be impacted by the resource/presentation both during and following the session being intentional about those with **lived and living experiences**.

### Debriefing time

Detail the plan in place to debrief with the learners about the topics covered in the presentation/video/material and provide information to access the school counsellor and/or mental health supports if/when needed.

## Ongoing learning

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Detail the plan (i.e. next steps, follow-up) for ongoing learning and support.



## Talking to Children and Youth about Decriminalization and Substance Use: Resources for Parents/Guardians and Caregivers

January 31, 2023

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### Background:

As you may be aware, Health Canada has granted the Province of British Columbia an exemption from the federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, allowing the removal of criminal penalties for possession of small amounts of certain illicit substances for personal use.

Decriminalizing people who use drugs is a part of the Government's work to tackle the toxic drug crisis, intended to remove the shame and stigma associated with substance use and support people in accessing important health and social services.

To be clear, this exemption does not apply to licensed child care or K-12 school properties. The federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* continues to apply to these settings, meaning there will continue to be criminal penalties for possession of illegal substances, regardless of amount, while on child care and or K-12 school properties.

This exemption also does not apply to youth aged 17 and younger, who will continue to be subject to the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA). This means that youth aged 17 and younger will not be permitted to possess illicit substances in any amount.

It is important to note that decriminalizing people who use illicit substances does not mean legalizing drugs. This is not the same as legalizing cannabis as the federal government did; decriminalized drugs will not be sold in stores and they are not legal to manufacture. Drug trafficking and similar drug-related offences involving illegal substances in any amount will remain illegal.

Removing the shame and stigma associated with substance use is one tool of many in British Columbia's response to the toxic drug crisis as laid out in *A Pathway to Hope*, the Government's roadmap for building a supports and services for mental health and addictions care.

This plan also guides the creation and expansion of substance use services for British Columbians – including doubling the number of youth treatment beds – ranging from prevention and early intervention to intensive treatment and crisis intervention. Prevention efforts include the opening of 14 Foundry centres across the province, which provide wraparound mental health and substance use support to young people.

### Talking to Young People:

While decriminalization will not apply to youth aged 17 and younger, this important change could provide an opportunity to talk openly with your child or youth about substance use and addictions.

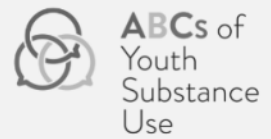
The Ministry of Education and Child Care's [Expect Respect and A Safe Education \(erase\) substance use website](#) also provides students, parents/guardians, caring adults and educators with information and resources to support conversations with youth about substance use. The website has been updated to include information regarding the exemption to decriminalize people who use drugs and what decriminalization means—and what it does not mean—for youth in BC.

For further information regarding drug decriminalization in B.C., please visit:

- [Government of British Columbia – Decriminalizing personal possession of illicit substances](#)
- [Government of Canada – Exemption from the \*Controlled Drugs and Substances Act\*](#)

APRIL 2022

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# Delivering Substance Use Education



**EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES**

**INTENDED FOR:**  
Classroom Teachers &  
Those Supporting  
Classroom Learning





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The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance use education in BC schools. Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

# Intro to this Resource

Substance use is complex. While substance use education may feel daunting to deliver, it is important to remember that you do not need to be a health expert to do it well.

This resource summarizes the evidence to help you to select resources and approaches to substance use education in the classroom.

Links to additional reference materials are provided for those who may wish to explore further. A list of curriculum-aligned evidence based resources is included at the end.



## Recommendations

When you are searching for substance use education resources to support your work in the classroom, there are a number of considerations to help guide your choices and support your practice. The research points to approaches that follow the parameters below.

## Focus on Nurturing Youth Resilience

In a world where substances are readily available, focusing on developing the capacity of youth to understand and manage themselves and their environment is an effective approach. Nurturing youth resilience requires building the capacity of youth to adapt to changing circumstances and to deal with past, present and future adversities. Focus on developing youth autonomy and agency and supporting a classroom culture where people feel heard, valued, safe and connected.

[Learn more here.](#)

## Enhance Youth Competencies

This involves improving the knowledge, skills and ability to act and navigate a world that includes substances. It includes learning how to think about and manage one's use of substances, reducing the potential for substance use harms, as well as promoting the well-being of their communities.

[Learn more here.](#)

## Strive for Meaningful Engagement and Inquiry

Instead of isolated facts, statistics or scare tactics, look for ways to get to deeper, more relevant learning. Replace didactic lessons with those that result in dialogue and discussion. Inquiry-based methods that prompt reflection and exploration result in building youth capacity.

[Learn more here.](#)

## Reduce Stigma

A non-stigmatizing approach can create an inviting environment where youth feel respect, dignity and an invitation to dialogue honestly and openly about substance use issues. This frees the adolescent mind to process their own feelings and values and, if using, possibly self-monitor, explore options and seek support. Your commitment to creating a safe and caring classroom also creates the environment for an open and honest dialogue on substance use. Account for the diversity of life experiences that youth in your classroom may have due to their race, culture, sexuality, gender, socioeconomic status and/or religion.

[Learn more here.](#)

## Grow Youth Capacity and Confidence

Build the confidence and ability of youth to consider their options regarding substance use. Support them to explore their values and ambitions, and prompt reflection on how substance use may affect their plans. Substance use education should build youth capacity to make decisions regarding substances that reflect current health and safety information while accounting for their goals, connections to family, school and community, and their passions. This is a stark contrast to a focus on behaviour modification with some prescribed end-goal in mind such as “just say no”.

**[Learn more here.](#)**

## Teachers as Facilitators

The evidence shows that teacher-facilitated substance use education is more effective than isolated sessions with external presenters. Teachers know students well and can help set the stage for more meaningful inquiry and productive learning, in an inclusive, culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate manner.

As noted in the Chief Public Health Officer’s 2018 Report, “In general, fear- and abstinence-based programs delivered by police officers in schools are mostly ineffective and do not resonate with youth.”

There are many no-cost, low barrier resources available that provide teachers with all the required materials allowing for adaptation in a manner that best suits their classroom context while staying true to using more promising approaches.

Learn more about these topics here:

1. **[ABCs of Youth Substance Use Education Resource](#)**
2. **[Understanding Drug Use and Gambling](#)**

## Align with the BC Ministry of Education K-12 Curriculum

BC curriculum is designed to build the core competencies that all students need in order to engage in deep, lifelong learning. We recommend using curriculum-aligned resources that ideally identify the big ideas, core competencies and First People’s Principles of Learning as well as the subject area curricular connections. Substance use education need not be limited to the PHE curriculum area. English Language Arts, Social Studies, Sciences and other curricular areas are well suited for helping build young people’s substance use literacy.

See below section for list of recommended resources, many that align with BC’s K-12 curriculum.





## Try to Avoid

There is an increasing body of research that shows that substance use education through the approaches listed below may do more harm than good. They do not build youth capacity to navigate a world of substances. The approaches are not recommended.

## Dramatic, Hard-hitting Presentations

Sensationalized presentations with dramatic footage of crashed cars or sharing the life stories of people with lived experience of substance use fall short of building youth competencies. While they may engage youth emotionally, evidence suggests their impacts are short lasting at best and can be triggering for some. Hosting such events and speakers are no substitute for more promising approaches to building substance use literacy, divert precious resources and potentially reduce the perceived need for more meaningful and helpful learning opportunities. They can also work against the actual goal of strengthening youth's resilience and competence to sort out their own perspective and actions.

## Lectures Filled with Facts, Statistics and Scare Tactics

Such approaches shut down versus open up honest sharing (for example acknowledge that substance use can meet social needs and be helpful, not just harmful) and limit important interaction, inquiry and deeper learning that are required in helping young people develop the competencies they need to navigate our substance-using world.

## Programs led by External Presenters

Creating a safe, caring, trauma-informed classroom culture is key to helping young people learn, whatever the topic. In addition to doing this, teachers know their students well and are skilled in pedagogies that help set the stage for more meaningful, sustained and productive learning, in an inclusive, culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate manner.

## One-size Fits all Programs

Substance use education that does not take into account the range and diversity of experience with substance use among the students in the class can be ineffective. As far as possible it is best to tailor education to where youth are at rather than taking a "one size fits all" approach.

# Grade Level Resources

**1**

Substance Use Education  
Recommended Resources - Grades K-5

**2**

Substance Use Education  
Recommended Resources - Grades 6-8

**3**

Substance Use Education  
Recommended Resources - Grades 9-12



# Learn More

Below are the Canadian organizations, related research reviews and summaries upon which the above statements were based. These offer additional insight into evidence-informed approaches to substance use education – in the classroom and across the broader school community.

<p><b>Public Health Agency of Canada</b></p> <p><b>Blueprint for Action</b></p> <p><b>Last Updated: 2021-08-13</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Summary of a Blueprint for Action: Preventing substance-related harms among youth through a Comprehensive School Health approach</a></p> <p><a href="#">Preventing substance-related harms among Canadian youth through action within school communities: A policy paper</a></p>
<p><b>Canadian Institute on Substance Use Research</b></p> <p><b><a href="#">Helping Schools Program</a></b></p>	<p>Professional learning and support series which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">“Evaluating substance use and gambling education”</a> (2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">“Facilitating dialogue in the classroom”</a> (2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">“Health Education is Education: an introduction to iMinds”</a> (2020)</li> <li>• <a href="#">“Rethinking ‘Risk’ in Health Education”</a> (nd)</li> <li>• <a href="#">“Why should schools move away from punitive responses” infographic</a> (nd)</li> <li>• <a href="#">“Drug and gambling education as health promotion”</a> (2019)</li> <li>• <a href="#">“Cannabis use and youth: change and opportunity for schools”</a> (2019)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Health Agency of Canada</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Preventing Problematic Substance Use in Youth – Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2018.</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Joint Consortium for School Health</b></p>	<p><a href="#">“Addressing Substance Use in Canadian Schools” Toolkits</a></p>
<p><b>OPHEA Healthy Schools Healthy Communities</b></p>	<p>The <a href="#">Elementary Educator Discussion Guide</a> provides rationale for promoting an open dialogue within the elementary school community about recreational and medical cannabis, and to foster a whole-school approach and shared responsibility when dealing with situations involving cannabis.</p> <p>A version for Secondary Educators is <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

## Decriminalization of people who use drugs and impacts for BC K–12 education

December 16, 2022

Health Canada has granted B.C. an exemption from the federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, allowing the removal of criminal penalties for possession of small amounts of certain illicit substances for personal use.

As of January 31, 2023, for an initial three-year period, adults aged 18 and over will be allowed to possess up to 2.5 g cumulative of opioids, cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA for personal use without having their drugs seized or being subject to arrest or charges for simple possession.

The exemption **will not apply on licensed child care or K–12 school premises**, meaning that adults aged 18 and over will continue to be subject to criminal penalties for possession of controlled substances, regardless of amount while on licensed child care or school premises. The exemption will also not apply to youth aged 17 and younger, who will continue to be subject to the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA). Existing school district policies concerning substance use and possession on school property will continue to apply. As such, there will be no change from the current regulatory environment concerning illicit substances on school premises after January 31.

Decriminalization is one tool in B.C.'s accelerated overdose response plan. Through *A Pathway to Hope*, government's 10-year framework for improving mental health and substance use care in B.C., government is working on improvements to the overall system of care to help young people before they reach a crisis point. Government is creating and expanding substance use care for young people across the province, ranging from prevention and early intervention to intensive treatment and crisis intervention.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care is committed to supporting student success. A major component of this is ensuring healthy and effective learning environments so that all students feel safe. Schools continue to be substance-free environments where students and educators can engage in proactive conversations about healthy lifestyle choices. B.C.'s curriculum currently offers a variety of opportunities for teachers to discuss substance use with students. Topics related to substance use are found in the kindergarten to Grade 10 Physical and Health Education (PHE) curriculum.

For further information regarding drug decriminalization in B.C., please see:

- [Government of British Columbia – Decriminalizing personal possession of illicit substances](#)
- [Government of Canada – Exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act](#)

The Ministry of Education and Child Care's [Expect Respect and A Safe Education](#) (erase) website provides students, parents/guardians, caring adults, and educators with information and resources to support healthy and effective learning environments, including how to have conversations about substance use. In the coming weeks, the website will be updated to include information regarding the exemption to decriminalize personal possession of certain substances and what it means for youth. Resources for B.C. K–12 education staff on evidence-based approaches to substance use education and related school-based prevention and harm reduction efforts are also available on the [ABCs of Youth Substance Use](#) website.

For any questions about substance use decriminalization, please contact Chris Van Veen ([chris.vanveen@gov.bc.ca](mailto:chris.vanveen@gov.bc.ca)), Senior Director with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

# Preparing Parents and Caregivers for Substance Use Connections



**EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES**

**INTENDED FOR:**  
Parents & Caregivers





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The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to support approaches that have been shown to be effective in preventing, delaying and reducing substance-related harms for youth.

**Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies** are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is funded by the BC Ministry of Health with support and input from the BC Ministry of Education and the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction.

# About this Resource

This resource provides parents and caregivers with information about how to talk about substance use with their child.

It also outlines where parents can access additional information to build their own understanding, and where they can access help if their child is struggling with a substance use issue.

Resources may be added to this list. Have something to suggest? We'd love to hear from you at [\*\*hello@theabcs.ca\*\*](mailto:hello@theabcs.ca).



# Talking About Substance Use

Parents and caregivers often wonder about the best way to approach talking about substance use. There is no single “right” way to have these conversations. What you say and do is valuable and makes a difference. Here are some tips and resources you might find useful as you help your child(ren) navigate this aspect of life successfully.



**Stay connected** – Strong relationships with caring adults help promote health and can be helpful in protecting against harmful substance use.



**Have fun** – Observe and identify the interests and passions of your child and purposefully make time to recognize, value and celebrate those things.



**Listen first** – Be positive, caring and allow time for reflection.



**Be aware and available** – Pay attention to what is going on in your child’s life. Note sudden changes in mood or schoolwork. Respect their need for independence but let them know you are ready to help. Make time for conversations, letting your child know their opinions matter and sets the stage for bigger conversations during more challenging times.



**Be mindful of adolescent development** – As youth move from childhood to adulthood, their brains and bodies go through a lot of change. These changes often affect their emotions and behaviours. They often focus on the ways they relate to youth peers. Respect that youth may need some time and space to think and feel their way through a new situation.



**Share clear, consistent expectations** – Be clear with your child(ren) about setting boundaries, guidelines and rules related to substance use. The more you discuss these openly with your child, the more likely they will understand your intentions, the reasons for them, and the more likely they will adopt them.



**Learn from mistakes** – Life presents many chances to learn, including those times that involve substance use. Use mistakes as an opportunity to learn together.



**Expect to be challenged** – Be respectful and prepared to negotiate but clearly communicate your position and your own values.



**Build their skills** – Help your child to solve their own issue instead of solving it for them. This helps build their confidence and resilience.



**Be a positive role model** – How do you have fun, spend time with friends, or deal with stress? From an early age, your child will watch and learn behaviours from you. They see how you monitor, limit or turn down chances to use substances. Lead by example.



**Be informed**– Youth may use substances for many reasons, including wanting to feel good, cope with pain or stress, or for fun. Understanding what is going on in your youth's life and that substance use, if present, might be meeting some needs, can help you support them.



**Put their safety first** – Prepare youth to be safe in case they choose to use a substance. Teach your child how to reduce substance-related harms by discussing steps they can take to be safe – *not too much, not too often, never alone and never when dangerous (eg. when driving)*.



# Additional Information

<a href="#"><u>HEALTHLINK BC</u></a>	A variety of resources provide advice on how you can begin and continue having conversations about substance use with your child.
<a href="#"><u>KELTY MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTRE</u></a>	Includes information on types of substances, how to talk with your child about substance use, and what to do if you are concerned about problematic substance use. You will also find information about concurrent disorders, which is when mental illness and substance use disorders happen at the same time.
<a href="#"><u>SUBSTANCE USE AND YOUNG PEOPLE: A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES AND THEIR CARING COMMUNITIES</u></a>	This guide offers support to help parents and other caring adults talk with young people about substances.
<a href="#"><u>FOUNDRY</u></a>	Offers young people ages 12-24 (and their parents/caregivers) health and wellness resources, services and supports – online and through integrated service centres in communities across BC
<a href="#"><u>TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT VAPING</u></a>	A tip sheet for parents from Health Canada
<a href="#"><u>QUIT NOW BC</u></a>	A go-to place for those looking to quit smoking or vaping.
<a href="#"><u>CANNABIS - WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW</u></a>	Includes practical tips and strategies for talking with your child about cannabis, signs of use, considerations if the adults in the home use cannabis and additional helpful resources.
<a href="#"><u>TALKING POT WITH YOUTH</u></a>	This is a resource for parents produced with input from youth. It is a comprehensive guide that can help one better understand youth's perspective and provides answers to frequently asked questions about cannabis to support your conversation with a youth.
<a href="#"><u>TALKING TO YOUTH ABOUT OVERDOSE</u></a>	Shares information, tips and related resources and videos specific to talking about overdose.
<a href="#"><u>RECOGNIZING RESILIENCE: A WORKBOOK FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF TEENS INVOLVED WITH SUBSTANCES</u></a>	This is a workbook for parents and caregivers who love and worry about a teenager who may be experimenting with or regularly engaged in a relationship with substances.

# Need Immediate Help?

If your youth is showing signs of becoming dependent or is using substances to cope with problems, anxiety or depression, talk to someone:

## **Alcohol & Drug Info Line**

1-800-663-1441  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

## **Mental Health Support Line**

310-6789 (no area code needed)  
[www.CrisisLines.bc.ca](http://www.CrisisLines.bc.ca)

## **Online Chat for Adults**

[www.CrisisCentreChat.ca](http://www.CrisisCentreChat.ca)

## Where You Are

# Promoting Student Well-Being: The ABCs of Substance Use Education

S04E4 | January 18, 2023



When it comes to substance use education, school professionals are an important resource. Schools can provide supportive environments that promote overall well-being and equip students with the confidence, knowledge, and skills they need to make decisions about the substances they'll encounter as they grow. Bryn and guest co-host Cindy Andrew come together with Dave Mackenzie, School Counsellor and Art Steinmann, Youth Substance Use Health Promotion Specialist to talk about the ABCs of substance use education and schools. They share evidence-based approaches that help students build protective factors including autonomy, belonging and competence and describe how this can help prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

*This episode is a collaboration between BC Children's Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre and Bunyaad Public Affairs Inc.*

Transcript is available [here](#).

## EPISODE RESOURCES

Website: The ABCs of Youth Substance Use Promoting evidence-based approaches to youth substance-use education in BC schools.

Website: School Professionals - Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre Resources for teaching and learning about mental health and well-being in school communities.

Podcast: Substance Use: Talking alcohol, vaping & other drugs with your kids.  
Guest bios

# Art Steinmann

Senior Associate, Bunyaad Public Affairs

Art Steinmann is a Senior Associate, Youth Substance Use Health Promotion, at Bunyaad Public Affairs Inc. Art brings over 40 years of experience in substance use policy, education, program development, advocacy and health promotion work including co-founding and co-developing SACY (Supporting and Connecting Youth program) for the Vancouver School Board. Art also works on the ABCs of Youth Substance Use Project.

# Dave Mackenzie

School Counsellor

Dave MacKenzie is a school counsellor and has been an educator for more than 25 years. Dave is an active member of the mental health community in BC, member of the BC School Centered Mental Health Coalition and President of the BC School Counsellors Association.

# Cindy Andrew

Guest Co-Host, Senior Associate K-12 Health Promotion

Cindy Andrew is a mother of two, a former teacher and long time health promoter. She is a Senior Associate on the team leading The ABCs of Youth Substance Use, a BC government project funded by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Education focused on supporting schools in addressing substance use with youth.

## Recent Episodes

### Podcast Episode

## Supporting Your Child Who Has Experienced Trauma

**Where You Are | Episode E10 | May 24, 2023**

Our hosts Bryn and Char speak with Lynne Godfrey (parent and grandparent) and Dr. Linda Uyeda to explore trauma, understand its impact on mental health and wellbeing, and share strategies parents and caregivers can use to support their child who has experienced trauma.

[kelty.link/11394](https://kelty.link/11394)

### Podcast Episode

## Re-Release (ICYMI) - Eating Disorders: How Parents Can Play an Active Role in Recovery

**Where You Are | Episode E9 | May 3, 2023**

In this episode Michelle and Bryn are joined by Kelly, a parent of a youth diagnosed with an eating disorder, and Dr. Jennifer Coelho, Psychologist at BC Children's Hospital's Provincial Specialized Eating Disorder Program, to answer questions we often hear from families about supporting a youth with an eating disorder.

[kelty.link/11368](https://kelty.link/11368)

## Podcast Episode

# No Shortage of Questions: Helping Kids Cope with Big Life Changes

| Episode E8 | April 12, 2023





In this minisode, we bring questions from BC families to a leading BC Children's Hospital child psychiatrist and family therapist on how to support kids through big life events and changes such as starting a new school, moving, etc. Listen for strategies that you can share with your child to help them cope with changes that come with big life events.

[kelty.link/11353](https://kelty.link/11353)

◀ [See all podcast episodes](#)

## Stay Connected

Join our newsletter to get the latest on resources, news and upcoming events.

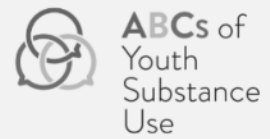
	<a href="https://keltymentalhealth.ca">keltymentalhealth.ca</a>	BC Children's Hospital
	<a href="mailto:keltycentre@cw.bc.ca">keltycentre@cw.bc.ca</a>	Healthy Minds Centre, Entrance #85,
	604 875 2084	Room P3-302, 3rd Floor
	1 800 655 1822	4500 Oak Street
		Vancouver, BC V6H 3N1

Last reviewed: August 29, 2018

Close

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# Substance Use Education Resources - Grades 6-8



**EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES**

**INTENDED FOR:**  
Classroom Teachers &  
Those Supporting  
Classroom Learning







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The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance use education in BC schools. Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

# Intro to this Resource

Please take a moment to review the resources below that support your work in delivering substance use education. These resources are aligned to various grade levels of the PHE curriculum. Several of these resources also align to other curricular areas, including English language, Arts and Social Studies among others.

While beyond the scope of this list, classroom and school wide efforts to enhance the social and emotional competencies and mental health literacy of learners are integral to promoting the health and wellbeing of youth.

Resources may be added to this list. Have something to suggest? We'd love to hear from you at [\*\*hello@theabcs.ca\*\*](mailto:hello@theabcs.ca).

Grades	Description & Cost	Why it's included
<b>iMinds</b>		
6 - 9	<p>Wide range of curriculum-linked learning materials and resources to teach substance use literacy, searchable by grade and/or subject. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Rolling with Life's Challenges (Gr 6-8)</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Rat Park (Gr 6-7)</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">The Ups and Downs of Stress (Gr 8-9)</a></li> </ul> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a constructivist approach based on a 5-I model that is explained <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>• Includes specific reference to alignment with BC Ministry of Education curriculum, including big ideas, core competencies and First Peoples' Principles of Learning</li> <li>• Specifically designed (though not limited to) for the BC K-12 education system</li> <li>• Addresses other curricular areas beyond PHE</li> </ul>
<b><u>Becoming a Detective – an iMinds module</u></b>		
6	<p>Through this 6-lesson module students learn how to be detectives. They examine “clues” about the potential influences on a young person’s behaviour to solve a case involving three students who keep falling asleep in class.</p> <p>The module includes background material, lesson plans, and black-line masters.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a constructivist approach based on a 5-I model that is explained <a href="#">here</a></li> <li>• Includes a reference to alignment with BC Ministry of Education curriculum including big ideas, core competencies and First Peoples' Principles of Learning</li> <li>• Specifically designed (though not limited to) for the BC K-12 education system</li> <li>• Six-lesson unit with all required information/ materials provided</li> </ul>
<b><u>The Fourth R</u></b>		
7 - 9	<p>The Fourth R is a skills-focused and relationship-based program. Units include a focus on Personal Safety &amp; Injury Prevention; Substance Use, Addictions &amp; Related Behaviours; Human Development &amp; Sexual Health; Healthy Eating</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competency enhancement and positive youth development focused</li> <li>• Includes resources for parents, and some have additional activities for children and</li> </ul>

	<p>Introductory video online <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Cost: Applicable; see website for more information</p>	<p>parents to work through together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes skill development</li> <li>• Available in English and French</li> </ul>
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### **Clearing the Cloud: Vaping Prevention Toolkit**

5 - 7	<p>A vaping resource that includes factsheets, PowerPoint presentation with talking notes, activities for students, and resources for parents.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive selection of ready to use materials</li> <li>• Focuses on technical and factual information about vapes and vaping</li> <li>• Includes info on legislation and reasons youth use</li> <li>• Explains components of a vape and how vaping works</li> <li>• PowerPoint presentation designed to augment the printed resources</li> </ul>
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### **Cannabis Education Activity Plans Gr. 5-12**

5 - 12	<p><u>Cannabis Education Activity Plans</u>: have been designed for grades 5-12 to provide students with inquiry-based activities to address the topic of cannabis. The activities link to evidence-based information and connect to the substance use, addictions and related behaviours curriculum expectations within the H&amp;PE curriculum.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging activity plans for grades 5-12</li> <li>• Links to evidence-based information on emerging trends</li> <li>• The framework to adapt activity plans to support student learning on other substances</li> </ul>
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### **Get READY**

7 - 9	<p>A comprehensive resource designed to assist teachers to provide evidence-based approaches to help students explore positive ways to address drug-related issues.</p> <p>Some lessons are designed to increase the basic knowledge necessary for students to manage drug and related issues, but more commonly, these lessons facilitate the exploration of the social world of young people and help them with the many decisions they face.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All required materials are provided, including background rationale and a helpful overview of critical elements of effective school-based drug education.</li> <li>• Competency enhancement and positive youth development focused.</li> <li>• Engaging, interactive pedagogy</li> </ul>
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	<p>Developed to support Australian schools, this resource aligns well with the BC PHE curriculum though those specific links are not referenced. For BC stats and trends related to youth substance use, consult McCreary Centre Society's <a href="#">Adolescent Health Survey</a> results and related reports.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'Talking further' tasks at the end of each session are designed to stimulate discussion with parents/caregivers.</li> </ul>
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## **Preventure**

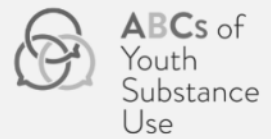
7 - 12	<p>An evidence-based prevention program that uses personality-targeted interventions to promote mental health and delay substance use among teens. PreVenture workshops are designed to help adolescents learn useful coping skills, set long-term goals and channel their personalities toward achieving them.</p> <p>Cost: Applicable; see website for more information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted program that can serve as a helpful complement to more universal application learning efforts.</li> <li>• Strong evaluation results.</li> <li>• Low time commitment is an advantage</li> </ul>
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## **LifeSkills Training**

6 - 9	<p>Botvin LifeSkills Training promotes healthy alternatives to risky behaviours through activities designed to: teach students the necessary skills to resist social (peer) pressures to smoke, drink, and use drugs; help students develop greater self-esteem and self-confidence; enable students to cope with anxiety effectively; increase students' knowledge of the immediate consequences of substance abuse, and enhance cognitive and behavioural competency to reduce and prevent a variety of health risk behaviours.</p> <p>LST can be implemented in any subject area and can be taught across multiple subjects. It is designed to use developmentally appropriate and collaborative learning strategies taught through lecture, discussion, coaching, and practice to enhance students' self-esteem, self-confidence, ability to make decisions, and resist peer and media pressure.</p> <p>Developed to support US schools initially.</p> <p>Cost: Applicable; see website for more information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive and engaging</li> <li>• Strong evaluation results</li> <li>• Recognized as a well-assessed mainstream program</li> </ul>
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# Substance Use Education Resources - Grades 9-12



**EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES**

**INTENDED FOR:**  
Classroom Teachers &  
Those Supporting  
Classroom Learning





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The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance use education in BC schools. Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

# Intro to this Resource

Please take a moment to review the resources below that support your work in delivering substance use education. These resources are aligned to various grade levels of the PHE curriculum. Several of these resources also align to other curricular areas, including English language, Arts and Social Studies among others.

While beyond the scope of this list, classroom and school wide efforts to enhance the social and emotional competencies and mental health literacy of learners are integral to promoting the health and wellbeing of youth.

Resources may be added to this list. Have something to suggest? We'd love to hear from you at [\*\*hello@theabcs.ca\*\*](mailto:hello@theabcs.ca).



Grades	Resource & URL	Description & Cost	Why it's included
<b><u>Cannabis Education Activity Plans Gr. 5-12</u></b>			
Grade 5 - 12		<p><u>Cannabis Education Activity Plans</u>: have been designed for grades 5-12 to provide students with inquiry-based activities to address the topic of cannabis. The activities link to evidence-based information and connect to the substance use, addictions and related behaviours curriculum expectations within the H&amp;PE curriculum.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging activity plans for grades 5-12</li> <li>Links to evidence-based information on emerging trends</li> <li>The framework to adapt activity plans to support student learning on other substances</li> </ul>
<b><u>Get READY</u></b>			
Grades 7 - 9		<p>A comprehensive resource (from Australia) designed to assist teachers to provide evidence-based approaches to help students explore positive ways to address drug-related issues.</p> <p>Some lessons are designed to increase the basic knowledge necessary for students to manage drug and related issues, but more commonly these lessons facilitate the exploration of the social world of young people and help them with the many decisions they face.</p> <p>Developed to support Australian schools, this resource aligns well with BC PHE curriculum though those specific links are not referenced. For BC stats and trends related to youth substance use, consult McCreary Centre Society's <a href="#">Adolescent Health Survey</a> results and related reports.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All required materials are provided including background rationale as well as a helpful overview of critical elements of effective school-based drug education</li> <li>Competency enhancement and positive youth development focused.</li> <li>Engaging, interactive pedagogy</li> <li>The 'Talking further' tasks included at the end of each session are designed to stimulate discussion with parents/caregivers</li> </ul>
<b><u>Prevention</u></b>			
Grades 7 - 12		<p>An evidence-based prevention program that uses personality targeted interventions to promote mental health and delay substance use among teens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A targeted program that can serve as a helpful complement to more universally</li> </ul>

		<p>PreVenture workshops are designed to help adolescents learn useful coping skills, set long-term goals and channel their personality towards achieving them.</p> <p>Cost: Applicable; see website for more information</p>	<p>application learning efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong evaluation results.</li> <li>• Low time commitment is an advantage</li> </ul>
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### Cycles

<p>Grades 9 - 10</p>		<p>A film-based resource, developed in Vancouver, that encourages teens to talk openly and honestly about why some young people use cannabis. It includes a 28-min video in English and a version with French sub-titles and a facilitator's guide in English and French.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realistic video that facilitates open, honest, conversations on cannabis use and mental health</li> <li>• Effectively underscores how decisions impact the lives of others (e.g. younger sibling, girlfriend, etc)</li> <li>• Supported with facilitator's guide</li> <li>• Available in English and French</li> </ul>
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### Drug Cocktails – “Facts for Youth about mixing Medicine, Booze and Street Drugs”

<p>Grades 9 -12</p>		<p>This website was created to help youth “get the facts” about the effects and risks of mixing prescribed medications with substances.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-judgemental, accurate information related to mixing substances</li> <li>• Helpful resource for engaging youth in harm reduction-related education</li> <li>• Accurate current factual info on a wide range of substances</li> </ul>
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### iMinds

<p>Grades 9 - 12</p>		<p>Wide range of curriculum-linked learning materials and resources to teach substance use literacy, searchable by grade and/or subject. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rethinking Risk: Ways to assess and manage risk as a part of life - <a href="#">In this lesson</a>, based on the Blunt Talk report by the McCreary Centre Society,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a constructivist approach based on a 5-I model that is explained <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>• Includes specific reference to alignment with BC Ministry of Education curriculum including big ideas, core competencies and</li> </ul>
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		<p>students explore different aspects of risk and risky behaviours, strategies to manage risk, and their application to substance use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health guidelines: Are they helpful? - this <a href="#">iMinds lesson idea</a> introduces some of these guidelines and recommendations that can provide a springboard for critically reviewing particular behaviours (eating, physical activity, substance use) and exploring how such guidelines might be useful in making decisions about health and well-being.</li> </ul> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<p>First Peoples' Principles of Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifically designed (though not limited to) for the BC K-12 education system</li> <li>• Addresses other curricular areas beyond PHE</li> <li>• "Rethinking Risk" activity referenced includes a game called "Factors" that's particularly helpful in facilitating meaningful student engagement and</li> </ul>
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#### **The Mike and Vicki Project**

Grades 9 - 12		<p>This interactive resource was developed to encourage conversation around decision-making and choices. The resource has a number of story strands relating to various themes such as drug use, relationships, feelings and communication.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging, non-judgemental resource that facilitated dialogue about the nuances of substance use and factors that underpin use</li> <li>• Includes facilitator's guide</li> <li>• Links to BC Ministry of Education curriculum are not included, though this does align with PHE 9/10.</li> </ul>
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#### **Sensible Cannabis Education Toolkit**

Grades 9 - 12		<p>The toolkit is broken into two parts. The first section highlights ten guiding principles for conducting cannabis education with young people. In this section, the concepts and values important to the delivery and implementation of cannabis education for youth are discussed. Although outlined in the context of cannabis, these principles are also applicable to education on other substances. The second section focuses on content that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An excellent, comprehensive reference tool that summarizes evidence-based approaches and key principles. While focused on cannabis, its content has relevance to other substances.</li> </ul>
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		<p>merits inclusion in a comprehensive cannabis education curriculum for young people, including evidence-based information about cannabis, its use and effects, as well as harm reduction strategies. This section also addresses many common claims made about youth cannabis use, such as the impacts on the developing brain.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The second section of this toolkit outlines core concepts educators and parents can draw on to familiarize themselves with cannabis and cannabis use and can additionally be used as a resource to assist in the information delivery component of a comprehensive drug education program.</li> </ul>
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### **Talking Pot with Youth: A Cannabis Communication Guide for Youth Allies**

<p>Grades 9 - 12</p>	<p>Provides introductory information and a set of exercises to engage youth in meaningful discussions and conversations about cannabis. This guide takes a harm reduction approach to talking with youth about cannabis. Its purpose is to help those who work with young people to have the right kind of conversations with them about cannabis: conversations that are safe, unbiased, informed and non-judgmental. Anyone who is looking for practical approaches to talking with youth about cannabis can use this guide. The updated edition contains answers to frequently asked questions about cannabis.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guides allies through a self-assessment process to determine potential biases and explain how to set these biases aside before talking with youth about cannabis;</li> <li>• Provides the values and principles for supportive communication, including practical ways to create a safe space for youth</li> <li>• Leads allies through the spectrum for using cannabis and supports allies in having judgment-free conversations about cannabis with youth; and</li> <li>• Provide answers to frequently asked questions about cannabis to support your conversation with a youth</li> <li>• Links to BC Ministry of Education curriculum are not included, though this does align with PHE 9/10.</li> </ul>
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### The Highway Home

Grades  
9 - 12

An interactive website that takes an experiential learning approach to mobilizing knowledge. Its purpose is to increase the awareness of youth and young drivers with the risks and harms associated with drug-impaired driving. The site guides users through real-life scenarios where they must make decisions about cannabis use and driving. This resource was developed to address key findings from Canadian youth perceptions on cannabis, including:

- Prevalence of cannabis use and cannabis-impaired driving among youth;
- The effects of cannabis on the body and driving performance
- Collision rates and serious injuries resulting from cannabis-impaired driving
- The unfamiliarity of young people with the methods of detecting cannabis-impaired drivers and
- Their lack of awareness about the legal and personal consequences of drug-impaired driving.

Cost: Free

- A useful complement to classroom conversations on drugs and driving
- Developed with youth input
- Links to BC Ministry of Education curriculum are not included, though this resource does align well with PHE 9/10

### Blunt Truth: useful tips about safer ways to use cannabis

Grades  
9 - 12

Developed by youth for youth, this harm-reduction resource may be useful in small group conversations with youth who regularly use cannabis

Cost: Free

- Developed locally by youth for youth
- Useful backdrop to conversation related to reducing harms
- Draws on BC data

### Talking Pot with Youth: A Cannabis Communication Guide for Youth Allies

Grades  
9 - 12

This guide takes a harm reduction approach to talking with youth about cannabis. Its purpose is to help parents and others who work with young people to have the right kind of conversations with them about cannabis: conversations that are safe, unbiased,

- Facilitates dialogue
- Unbiased and non-judgemental
- Includes FAQs

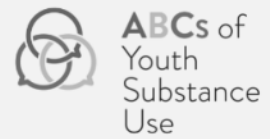
While not a curriculum-linked learning resource per se, this

		<p>informed and non-judgmental. The guide also provides answers to frequently asked questions.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<p>guide can serve as a helpful adjunct to harm reduction-related conversations.</p>
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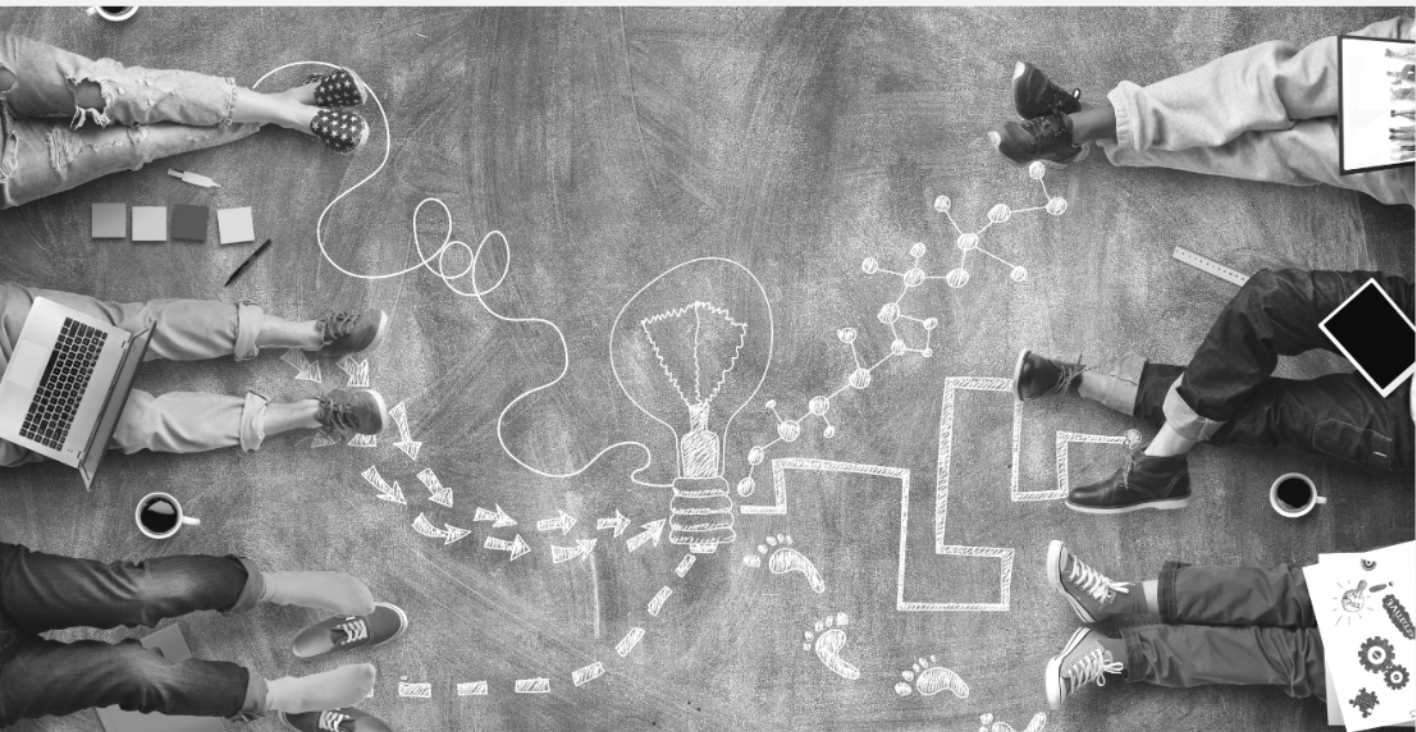
### **Know Before You Go (Gr. 12)**

<p>Grades 12</p>	<p>This resource is intended for Grade 12 students and the educators who support them, as they transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or employment. This life skills resource helps students anticipate, identify and navigate situations they will encounter when entering the realm of postsecondary education or the workforce. It contains information on many topics they may have not been formally exposed to yet as they learn to become independent. This includes information regarding paying bills, study skills, roommate issues, managing relationships and understanding more about their identity. Embedded throughout is how to maintain good mental health and seek help as needed.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive of all required materials</li> <li>• Engaging and interactive</li> <li>• Strong evaluation results</li> <li>• While it does not cover substance use in great detail, much of what is addressed relates to and supports building competencies related to good health overall include managing one's use of substances. To strengthen that aspect, discussion related to safer use (should one choose to use) could draw in some of the other resources noted on this list.</li> <li>• Also available in French</li> </ul>
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APRIL 2022



# Substance Use Education Resources - Grades K-5



**EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES**

**INTENDED FOR:**  
Classroom Teachers &  
Those Supporting  
Classroom Learning





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The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance use education in BC schools. Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.



# Intro to this Resource

Please take a moment to review the resources below that support your work in delivering substance use education. These resources are aligned to various grade levels of the PHE curriculum. Several of these resources also align to other curricular areas, including English language, Arts and Social Studies among others.

While beyond the scope of this list, classroom and school wide efforts to enhance the social and emotional competencies and mental health literacy of learners are integral to promoting the health and wellbeing of youth.

Resources may be added to this list. Have something to suggest? We'd love to hear from you at [\*\*hello@theabcs.ca\*\*](mailto:hello@theabcs.ca).

Grades	Description & Cost	Why it's included
<b><u>Elementary Educator Discussion Guide</u></b>		
K-6	<p>The Elementary Educator Discussion Guide aims to promote an open dialogue within the school community about recreational and medical cannabis, address questions and concerns, and foster a whole-school approach and shared responsibility when dealing with situations involving cannabis.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes and supports open dialogue within the school community about recreational and medical cannabis, to address questions and concerns, and foster a whole-school approach and shared responsibility when dealing with situations involving cannabis.</li> <li>Includes version for parents/guardians and caregivers</li> </ul>
<b><u>Alberta Health Services - Lesson Plans for Grades 3-6</u></b>		
3 - 6	<p>Series of 45-minute lessons for each grade level that are designed to encourage children to make healthy decisions regarding substance use and gambling.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readable and user-friendly</li> <li>Informative and concise</li> <li>Simple and easy to use</li> <li>Complete with extra information to help you feel comfortable with the topic</li> </ul>
<b><u>iMinds (Select iMinds from the sidebar)</u></b>		
4 - 6	<p>Wide range of BC Ministry of Education curriculum-linked learning materials and resources to teach substance use literacy, searchable by grade and/or subject.</p> <p><u>Explorers All (Gr 4)</u> – in this 5-lesson unit, students become ‘explorers’ who seek out and examine the benefits, risks and harms related to drugs and a range of options for managing everyday problems. Also available in French.</p> <p><u>We Are All Change Makers (Gr. 5/6)</u> – this iMinds lesson idea explores school connectedness and student engagement through an applied inquiry based on a Margaret Wheatley poem. A <u>teacher's guide</u> and <u>student handout</u> are available.</p> <p>Cost: Free</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a constructivist approach based on a 5-I model that is explained <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>Includes specific reference to alignment with BC Ministry of Education curriculum including big ideas, core competencies and First Peoples’ Principles of Learning</li> <li>Specifically designed (though not limited to) for the BC K-12 education system.</li> <li>Some of the lessons are also available in French.</li> <li>Addresses other curricular areas beyond PHE.</li> </ul>

### **Clearing the Cloud: Vaping Prevention Toolkit**

5 - 7

A vaping resource that includes factsheets, PowerPoint presentations with talking notes, activities for students, and resources for parents.

Cost: Free

- Comprehensive selection of ready-to-use materials
- Focuses on technical and factual information about vapes and vaping.
- Includes info on legislation and reasons youth use
- Explains components of a vape and how vaping works
- PowerPoint presentation designed to augment the printed resources

### **Cannabis Education Activity Plans Gr. 5-12**

5 - 12

Cannabis Education Activity Plans: have been designed for grades 5-12 to provide students with inquiry-based activities to address the topic of cannabis. The activities link to evidence-based information and connect to the substance use, addictions and related behaviours curriculum expectations within the H&PE curriculum.

Cost: Free

- Engaging activity plans for grades 5-12
- Links to evidence-based information on emerging trends
- The framework to adapt activity plans to support student learning on other substances

JUNE 2022

# Substance Use Services and Supports for Youth and Their Families

EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES

INTENDED FOR:

All education professionals  
looking to connect students and  
their families with appropriate  
substance use services and  
supports.

# Intro to this Resource

This set of resources is for education professionals looking to build their understanding of youth substance use. It offers basic insights to support education professionals in effectively connecting students to appropriate services.

Substance use is complex. We invite the reader to explore the links to additional reference materials we provide within these resources.

- [Adolescent Development and Substance Use](#) - understand the pattern of adolescent substance use and approaches to consider when supporting youth
- [Considerations for Education Professionals](#) - what classroom teachers, school counsellors and administrators can do to support students while connecting them to services
- [Substance Use Services and Supports for Youth and Their Families](#) - outlines what specific supports and locations of services

The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance use education in BC schools. Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

# Adolescent Substance Use Services and Supports in BC

## Emergency Help

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS IMMEDIATE HELP, CALL ONE OF THESE NUMBERS:**

### 9-1-1:

Call 9-1-1 if you are having a medical emergency. Available 24 hours a day.

### 310-Mental Health:

Call 310-6789 (no area code needed) toll-free anywhere in B.C. to access emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health and substance use issues. Available 24 hours a day.

### 1-800-SUICIDE:

Call 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) toll-free anywhere in B.C. if you or someone you know is in crisis. The Crisis Centre provides mental health or substance use support. Available 24 hours a day.

### Kid's Help Phone:

Call 1-800-668-6868 to speak to a professional counsellor. Available 24 hours a day.

Also available via text, Facebook Messenger and online chat at <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

## Alcohol and Drug Information & Referral Service

Dial 211 within Regional Districts of Squamish-Lillooet, the Fraser Valley and Metro Vancouver; 1-800-663-1441 elsewhere in BC

Anyone can call this service to receive information, options and support from a trained addictions referral counsellor. They can refer you to a full range of counselling and treatment services across BC. Services are confidential, multilingual, free, and available 24/7. If unsure where to go a call to the Alcohol and Drug Information & Referral Service from any place in BC is the top first step.

# Non-Emergency Help

## List of services across BC:

[Government of BC - Crisis and Information Lines](#)

[Government of BC - Mental Health and Substance Use Supports in BC](#)

Find a mental health and substance use service using this [map](#)

[Wellbeing](#) - Information maintained by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions to support your personal journey to wellbeing or supporting someone who is facing mental health or substance use challenges.

## Finding services near you:

[Government of BC Service Locator - Find Services Near You](#)

[crisis Centre Online Chat](#): Get support, information and resources for adults in B.C. and Yukon. Online chat is available from noon to 1am Pacific Time

[YouthinBC Online Chat](#): Get support, information and resources for youth in B.C. and Yukon. Online chat is available from noon to 1am Pacific Time

## HealthLink BC:

Call 8-1-1 (toll-free) if you need non-emergency health information or advice. Available 24 hours a day.

## Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre:

Call: 1-800-665-1822 toll-free from anywhere in B.C., or 604-875-2084 in the Lower Mainland, for peer support, assistance in navigating the mental health system and accessing resources, and information and education about mental health and substance use challenges. Available Monday to Friday from 9:30am to 5pm Pacific Time.

# Indigenous Supports

## FNHA First Nations Health Authority

<https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Mental-Health-and-Wellness-Youth-Poster.pdf>

FNHA Support Available 24 Hours a Day

Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention by phone or online chat. Call toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or start a confidential chat with a counsellor at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca).

Indian Residential School Crisis Line is a national service for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their residential school experience. Call toll-free 1-866-925-4419.

Kuu-Us Crisis Line Society provides crisis services for Indigenous people across BC. Adults/Elders line 250-723-4050; youth line 250-723-2040. Or call toll free 1-800-588-8717. Learn more at [www.kuu-uscrisisline.com](https://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com).

## Metis Nation

Métis Crisis Line is a service of Métis Nation British Columbia. Call 1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722). Available 24 hours, 7 days a week.



# Resources for Youth and Families

## Kelty Mental Health

Provincial resource centre that provides mental health and substance use information, resources, and peer support to children, youth and their families from across B.C.

<https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>

## Foundry

Helps youth and young adults in B.C. check out how they're feeling and quickly connect to mental health resources and support. Support includes education, self-care tools, website links, and assistance in connecting to local professional resources.

<https://foundrybc.ca/>

## Here to Help

Mental health and substance use self-help resources and personal stories.

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/>

## From Grief to Action

A voice and support network for families and friends affected by substance use.

<https://www.fgta.ca/>