

# SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION AND HARM REDUCTION: CURRICULUM SUPPORT HEALTH RESOURCES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS (2024-2025)

Successful substance use prevention education for young people provides age-appropriate, factual, non-stigmatizing information that helps students develop decision-making, relationship, and communication skills. The aim is to integrate substance use prevention messaging into all aspects of school life and connect youth with their community for support. Our goal is to engage youth and provide opportunities to emphasize their ability to make informed choices; acquire refusal skills; be a positive role model, build resilience and positively influence their peers. The hope is to also help decrease risk factors and increase protective factors in youth.

## MANUALS AND CURRICULUM RESOURCES/PAMPHLETS/POSTERS/HANDOUTS/WORKSHOPS/ DISPLAYS/SPEAKERS/PROGRAMS

### **Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addictions (CCSA): Understanding Substance Use Educator's Guide**

The [Educator's Guide](#) and the accompanying series of video modules have been designed to support and equip educators with information and resources to promote well-being and reduce substance related harms among youth. CCSA five [video modules](#) in the Understanding Substance Use video series. The series covers the following topics:

- Understanding Substance Use
- Understanding Stigma
- Understanding Cannabis Vaping
- Understanding Alcohol
- Understanding Impaired Driving

*(Available in French)*

### **Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) - Cannabis Education Resources**

A [database](#) to provide educators and administrators access to evidence-informed information on substance use (specifically cannabis) to help students develop the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions to support their health and well-being. *(Available in French).*

### **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) - [Mental health & addictions index](#)**

Educators can look up clear and reliable information about mental illness and substances, including treatment and recovery. *(Available in French).*

Public Health  
1-877-464-9675  
TTY 1-866-512-6228  
[york.ca/substanceuse](http://york.ca/substanceuse)



### **The Blunt Truth**

[A harm reduction resource](#) that has useful tips about safer ways to use cannabis (Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health). Designed for youth by youth, this easy-to-read [resource](#) provides tips about safer ways to use cannabis. It is based on Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines, also [available here](#). *(Available in French)*.

### **Niagara Region Teaching Tools**

These teaching [tools](#) are designed to support teachers in creating comprehensive lesson plans to cover Substance Use Prevention-related content in the classroom. The resources are guidelines and suggestions for teachers to use and considered appropriate for classes.

### **Media Smarts**

[Lesson plans and resources](#) on how media messages on alcohol influence attitudes about drinking. *(Available in French)*.

### **Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy: Sensible Cannabis Education - A Toolkit for Educating Youth**

Created for educators, as well as parents, [this resource](#) aims to support adults in having informed and non-judgmental conversations with young people about cannabis.

### **Stigma-Free Society**

The Student Mental Health [Toolkit](#) offers a variety of resources to help students improve their mental wellness and combat stigma, especially around mental health. Resources teach students topics related to various stigmas and encourage EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) in the classroom. The Toolkit program is made for youth, educators, school counsellors, and parents/guardians, who want to teach and promote mental wellness for Grades [4-7](#) and [8-12](#). *(Available in French)*.

### **Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario Substance Use and School: What Youth Want Educators to Know**

[This resource](#) is designed for school and system leaders and educators about youth substance use and [available resources](#). This resource was developed by Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO), in collaboration with School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON), the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) team at CAMH, and a Youth Reference Group made up of seven youth from across Ontario. It provides practical recommendations and information for those working with students and supporting substance use education in schools. *(Available in French)*.

### **York Region District School Board's Drug and Alcohol Continuum Tool Kit**

This is intended for teachers, guidance counselors and educational assistants. The kit provides information relating to drugs, alcohol use and the Drug and Alcohol Continuum. Additionally, the tool kit supports curriculum expectations outlined in the new Physical and Health Education Curriculum. (Teachers can access this through their internal YRDSB website under Caring and Safe schools).

**Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA)** provides evidence-based substance use resources. *(Available in French)*.

**Alcohol Resources:** [www.ccsa.ca/alcohol](http://www.ccsa.ca/alcohol)

### **Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health – [Youth Version Poster:](#)**

Provides a youth-focused summary of the recommendations in Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health in simple terms and illustrations. Includes information specifically for youth as well as tips to reduce alcohol-related risks.

**Cannabis Resources:** [www.ccsa.ca/cannabis](http://www.ccsa.ca/cannabis)

### **Talking pot with youth**

A cannabis communication [guide](#) for youth allies (Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction) This guide is designed to help adults who work with young people to have safe, unbiased, informed, non-judgmental conversations with youth about reducing the harms of cannabis. It provides practical exercises to help adults reflect on bias, create a safe space for conversation and understand the spectrum of cannabis use.

### **Cannabis: Inhaling vs. ingesting (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse)**

This [infographic](#) explains differences between the two most common ways of consuming cannabis – inhaling (i.e., smoking or vaping) and ingesting (i.e., eating or drinking). It includes tips for lower risk use.

### **Drug Free Kids Canada - *Cannabis Talk Kit: Know how to talk with your teen***

This discussion [guide](#) sets the stage for open and non-judgmental conversations about cannabis. It has practical tips for parents and all adults who work with youth. (*Available in French*).

### **TeenMentalHealth.org: 10 questions about cannabis use and your student**

This [infographic](#) for teachers answers key questions about cannabis use and students. It is part of a series of resources for school communities developed under the leadership of Dr. Stan Kutcher.

### **Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA): Pot + Driving**

This [website](#) outlines creative strategies to help adults address cannabis-impaired driving with youth, including both drivers and passengers. It includes a discussion guide for adults, a fact sheet for teens and posters to prompt discussion. (*Available in French*).

### **Government of Canada - Health effects of cannabis**

This [fact sheet](#) outlines both the short-term and long-term health effects of cannabis. It also discusses related issues like mental health, addiction, and brain development in youth. (*Available in French*).

## **York Region Public Health**

Please email us at [substance@york.ca](mailto:substance@york.ca) for copies of these resources:

### **Alcohol and Drugs: A Quick Guide**

A one pager resource that helps teachers or parents identify signs, side effects and behaviours of various drugs.

### **Booklets and postcards**

Resources to assist educators and parents in facilitating discussion around harms and risks associated with alcohol and drug use with youth including:

- Tips for Safer Partying
- A Matter of Facts

- Think About It - Youth Brain Development
- Drug and Alcohol Continuum - Where Do You See Yourself?
- Weed out the Myths
- Parents Matter: Strategies for Parents to Prevent or Delay Alcohol and other Drug Use

## POSTERS:

Available posters include:

- Alcohol and Drugs. Be Informed
- High School: Your move. Your choice.
- How Will Your Party End?
- Talk to your Child Early about Alcohol
- Weed out the Myths

**French language posters include:**

- Comment se terminera ta Fête?
- #Parlonsmarijuana
- Parlez Tôt avec votre Enfant au sujet de L'alcool
- Parent Booklet: Stratégies pour aider les parents à prévenir la consommation d'alcool chez les mineurs

## PRESENTATIONS/SPEAKERS

**York Region Public Health:** Our program offers engaging presentations to students, school staff and parents. Topics include Alcohol, Cannabis and Opioids. Please email us at [substance@york.ca](mailto:substance@york.ca)

**Empowered Youth Empower Choices. Peer-led Youth Programs.** Contact your Public Health Nurse or email us at [substance@york.ca](mailto:substance@york.ca) to request support for the following curriculum-matched peer-led programs:

- **How Will Your Party End?** Public Health Nurses providing training to student leaders in high school (e.g., prom committee, OSAID, ESP) to present/plan initiatives for their graduating class.
- **Life after Grade 8** Public Health Nurses train student leaders in high school to present to Grade 8 students to help make the transition to high school easier.
- **Transition to High School** Public Health Nurses train student leaders in high school to present to Grade 9 students to help with their first year in high school.

**Canadian Mental Health Association - Choices Program:** This [program](#) encourages youth between the ages of 12 to 17 to make informed and relevant decisions and promotes positive choices in their lives. Choices meet 2 hours/week for over 10 weeks.

**Addiction Services Central Ontario:** Providing presentations and resources about substance use, problem gambling and mental health in schools and the community. Click [here](#) to book a presentation.

**Accident Awareness:** Provides a motivational [digital media presentation](#) which encompasses fundamental aspects directly related to adolescents and dangerous driving. The topics included in our presentation are a direct result of extensive research conducted by members of the Accident

Awareness team. They offer two High School programs that are redesigned to fit today's pandemic situation.

**Mixed Company:** Offers [school productions and workshops](#) that have examined difficult social issues such as mental health stigma and support, healthy relationships and consent, and inclusion and equity.

**MADD Canada:** Youth and [school programming](#) have been a key component of MADD Canada's youth services, education and awareness initiatives since 1994. The presentations are designed to communicate directly with young people on their level and in their language and encourage them to take a closer look at their values and perceptions. *(Available in French).*

**P.A.R.T.Y. Program:** The P.A.R.T.Y. (Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth) [Program](#) is a one-day injury awareness and prevention program for youth age 15 and older. Developed in 1986 at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, this program is a vital component of the growing community effort to reduce death and injury in alcohol, drug and risk-related crashes and incidents.

**Springboard-Weed Out the Risks:** This is an innovative "Weed Out the Risk" [educational program](#) to address road safety risks of driving under the influence of cannabis for young drivers or being a passenger in a high driver's vehicle. Program messaging has been directly linked to the Ontario secondary school curriculum. Facilitators will deliver a classroom session to one or more classrooms at no cost.

**YMCA Youth Programs:** *(Available in French)*

- Youth Cannabis Awareness Program: YCAP is [a free cannabis education and prevention initiative](#) that takes a harm reduction approach for ages 12-24. The program aims to minimize risks associated with cannabis use by providing youth, and adults involved in youth's lives, with the most accurate and unbiased information.
- Youth Opioids Awareness Program: YOAP aims to increase awareness about opioids in youth ages 15–24 via harm reduction in an enjoyable way through workshops, activities such as escape rooms, crafts, and more. [The program](#) aligns with the health and physical education curriculum for grades 9-12 in Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador as well as British Columbia.
- Youth Gambling Awareness Program: YGAP offering [educational prevention programs](#) to youth and adults involved in young people's lives on gambling awareness including potential risks, making informed decisions and healthy and active living.

**YouthSpeak:** This youth-led [interactive presentation](#) helps students understand Substance Use, Addiction and Wellness. Youth speakers share personal stories about their challenges with being accepted for who they are and share a message of empowerment and hope. Students will better understand what they can do to step up in their community and actively create a more understanding environment with their peers.

## DISPLAYS FROM YORK REGION PUBLIC HEALTH

Available displays include:

- Weed out the Myths
- What's Your Substance IQ?
- How Will Your Party End?
- High School Your Move Your Choice (Grade 8/9)

## TREATMENT AND/OR COUNSELLING:

**Addiction Services Central Ontario:** [Addiction Services Central Ontario](#)

**York Hills Child and Family Services:** [Yorkhillscentre.ca](#)

**Centre for Addiction and Mental Health:** [CAMH](#)

**Connex Ontario, Drug and Alcohol Help Line:** [Connex Ontario](#)

**Family Services of York Region:** [Family Services York Region](#)

**Kinark Child and Family Services:** [Kinark Child and Family Services](#)

**YSSN Streamlined Access:** [Streamlined Access - Your Support Services Network \(yssn.ca\)](#)

**Community Services for Alcohol and Drug Use in York Region:** [Resource](#) document

**Family Navigation Project – Sunnybrook Health Services:** [Family Navigation Project - Youth Mental Health Service - Toronto - Sunnybrook Hospital](#)

## YOUTH CRISIS SUPPORT

**COPE Crisis Line (24 hours):** [310-COPE](#)

**Kids Help Phone (24 hours):** [Kids Help Phone](#)

This is a reference list (not a comprehensive list) of community resources. To request any resources from York Region Public Health, please call: Tel: 1-877-464-9675, ext. 76683 Fax: 905-762-2091 or email: [substance@york.ca](mailto:substance@york.ca)

For more information, please visit [york.ca/substanceuse](http://york.ca/substanceuse)