

Safety First

Educator Guide

Getting Prepared



Safety First: Real Drug Education for Teens Educator's Guide

Background

This BC curricular aligned learning resource is based on the original *Safety First: Real Drug Education for Teens*; developed by the US Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) in 2017 to provide teens with honest and scientifically accurate information, and to empower them to reduce drug-related harms. The program was updated in 2019, 2020 and 2021. In 2022, the DPA gave permission for Interior Health's Youth Harm Reduction Program to adapt the resource for use in British Columbia, Canada.

Most lessons are approximately 45-50 minutes long and include student handouts and assignments for further learning. Because of the addition of Canadian and BC content, some lessons are longer and may require additional time to complete.

Program Outcomes

Each lesson aligns with the [BC Physical and Health Education Curricular Competencies](#) for Social and Community Health and Mental Wellbeing.

The program will help students:

- Use critical thinking skills to access and evaluate information about alcohol and other drugs.
- Learn decision-making and goal-setting skills that help them make healthy choices related to substance use.
- Develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks, benefits and harms of alcohol and other drug use.
- Understand the impact of drug policies on personal and community health.
- Learn how to advocate for restorative drug policies and practices.

Research on the US Safety First Program

In Spring 2018, Safety First was piloted with ninth grade students at a New York City Department of Education secondary school. In Spring 2019, the evaluation was expanded to include a district-level collaboration, piloting Safety First in five San Francisco secondary schools with over 600 students.

Highlights from the evaluations include:

- Increased student knowledge of harm reduction and abstinence.
- Increased knowledge regarding alcohol, cannabis and opioids.
- Increased student knowledge of how to detect and respond to a drug-related overdose.
- **Teacher facilitation style was strongly associated with positive outcomes for students.**

Delivering Safety First

Recommended Grade Level: While Safety First aligns [BC's Physical and Health Education Curricular Competencies](#) for Social and Community Health and Mental Wellbeing at the grade 9 and 10 level, the content is also appropriate for classes at the grade 11 and 12 levels. If you are considering delivering the program to earlier grades, we recommend reviewing the content carefully to ensure its appropriate.

Do I have to deliver the full program? Evaluations by the USDPA were done on the delivery of the entire program, but we recognize that may not always be possible. If you can not deliver the program in its entirety, we recommend the following:

- Use lessons one, two, and three as foundational lessons prior to delivering any of the lessons on substances.
- Review the class norms regularly to help create a safe space for discussion.
- It's okay to select parts of a lesson that are most relevant to your class. For example, the lesson on stimulants contains information on more commonly used among youth in school like caffeine, energy drinks, and prescription stimulants as well as less frequently-used stimulants like methamphetamines.
- Consider using the lessons in a variety of classes where the material may be appropriate. The program has cross-curricular relevance with components that are relevant to Science, Health, Biology, Law, and History classes.



Worksheets: This symbol indicates that there are questions on the student worksheet about this part of the lesson. The worksheets can be found in the Educator's Guide at the end of each lesson. Using the worksheets is optional – most questions on the worksheet also lend themselves well to class or small group discussion.

Teacher facilitation style matters!

The research done in the U.S. showed that teacher facilitation style was strongly associated with positive outcomes for students. The key word here is “facilitation” – not expertise.

You do not have to be a substance use expert to deliver this program. You are not expected to know everything about drugs. If a question comes up and you don’t know the answer, that is a great opportunity for you to learn along with the class. Never be afraid to say, “I don’t know, why don’t we find out together?”.

This guide contains several tips and suggestions to support you in the delivering the lessons that you will not see in the PowerPoint slide notes. We recommend you read through the Educator’s Guide before delivering lessons.



Look for the *Creating Safety* symbol throughout the Educator Guide for tips and techniques to build a safe space for discussion. A safe learning space allows students to ask questions and share their opinions without fear of judgment.



The lightbulb symbol indicates an *Educator Note*. These notes have ideas for alternate delivery methods, sources of additional information or factors to consider/prepare for when delivering the content.

Talking with Youth About Drugs

The way you talk with youth about substances can create room for dialogue or shut it down. Here are some tips from youth themselves.

(*Safer Partying Workbook*, [BYTE: Empowering Youth Society](#), Whitehorse, Yukon)

Be conscious of your tone.

Use a tone and ask questions that encourage honest answers. Try saying things like “I want to understand more about that.”

Be comfortable with some silence.

If there is silence in your discussion, do not stress about filling it! Sometimes young people need time to feel safe.

Manage your expectations.

Do not start a conversation or lesson with a goal to change minds or tell youth what to do or not do. Instead, be open-minded about learning the student’s perspectives.

Be supportive and empower.

You might not necessarily agree with everything youth say, but let them know you stand by them and their right to make their own decisions and have their own opinions.

Listen.

Be present and set aside enough time to have a meaningful conversation. Listen to understand and not to respond.

Send us your feedback!

Whether you deliver all the lessons or just a few, we want to hear about your experience and your ideas on how we can make the Safety First program even better!

If you have questions about the program or find something that is not working, please let us know! YHRC@interiorhealth.ca

The Lessons

Lessons/ Title	Overview	Resources
FOUNDATIONAL LESSONS		
Lesson one What is a Drug?	Students examine their own beliefs about alcohol and other drugs by answering the question “What is a drug?”	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck
Lesson two Introduction to Harm Reduction	Students learn about harm reduction concepts and strategies including abstinence. They are empowered to make healthy and safe choices for themselves and others regarding substance use.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck
Lesson three How Drugs Work	Students learn how drugs affect the body and the brain - specifically the teenage brain. They further discuss factors that contribute to substance dependence.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck
LESSONS ON SUBSTANCES		
Lesson four Alcohol and Depressants	Students learn about the effects of depressant drugs with a focus on alcohol. They learn how to put someone in the recovery position and give advice about reducing alcohol-related harms using practice scenarios.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck Info Sheet – Alcohol
Lesson five Stimulants	Students learn about several stimulant drugs, including caffeine and energy drinks. Effects, benefits and risks are	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck

	discussed.	Info Sheets – Stimulants
Lesson six Vaping and E-cigarettes	Students explore the inner workings of e-cigarettes in-depth. They conduct research to examine the health effects of vaping, and evaluate their source’s credibility.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck
Lesson seven Cannabis – Part 1	Students play “Fact and Fiction About Cannabis” activity to see how much they know about the drug. They work in groups to research statements about cannabis, and evaluate the credibility of various information sources.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck Info Sheets – Cannabis
Lesson eight Cannabis – Part 2 (Longer lesson due to BC content)	Students learn about cannabis’ effects, potential risks and benefits, including the effects of edible cannabis. Students then share and evaluate each other’s research on statements about cannabis. Legalization of Cannabis in Canada (and BC) and implications for youth are discussed.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck
Lesson nine Psychedelics	Students learn about psychedelic drugs, their effects, risks and benefits. They reflect on drug references in the various forms of media and how they influence teens	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck Info Sheets – Psychedelics
Lesson ten Opioids	Students take an in-depth look at opioid drugs including prescription opioids, their effects, risks, and benefits. They will learn how to recognize the signs of an opioid overdose and respond appropriately.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck Info Sheets – Opioids
SUPPLEMENTAL LESSONS		
Lesson eleven Mental Health and Coping	Students discuss how substances may be used to deal with mental health issues like stress and anxiety. They learn healthier and safer alternatives as well as how to locate resources to help them cope.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck
Lesson twelve Understanding Zero-Tolerance	Students learn about zero-tolerance drug policies and their impact on health and well-being. Students also learn about restorative practices.	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck
Lesson thirteen Health and Drug Policy (Longer Lesson)	Students learn about drug policies including America’s “War on Drugs” and the history of drug policies in Canada. Decriminalization of certain substances in British Columbia, Canada is discussed – particularly as it relates	Educator Guide Worksheets Slide Deck

	to youth. Students discuss how various drug policies can impact health in positive or negative ways.	
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Don't forget to tell us what you think!

One last reminder to email YHRC@interiorhealth.ca with feedback.