

# YOUTH HARM REDUCTION: A TOOLKIT FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

“HARM REDUCTION” IS A TERM FOR PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT AIM TO REDUCE THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES ASSOCIATED WITH BEHAVIORS THAT ARE TYPICALLY CONSIDERED HIGH RISK. IT IS ALSO “A WAY OF BEING” OR AN APPROACH TO PROVIDING CARE AND SUPPORT THAT IS BASED IN RESPECT, COMPASSION AND INCLUSION.

A HARM REDUCTION APPROACH CAN BE USED TO SUPPORT YOUTH WITH A VARIETY OF TOPICS. THIS TOOLKIT FOCUSES PRIMARILY ON SUBSTANCE USE AND SEXUAL HEALTH.

THIS TOOLKIT WAS DESIGNED TO HELP YOUTH SERVICE PROVIDERS FIND CREDIBLE HARM REDUCTION INFORMATION, RESOURCES AND TOOLS TO SUPPORT THEM IN THE IMPORTANT WORK THEY DO.

WE HOPE YOU FIND THE RESOURCES HELPFUL. WE HOPE TO ADD TO IT AS NEW RESOURCES ARE DEVELOPED OR DISCOVERED, SO CHECK BACK OFTEN. PLEASE REACH OUT TO US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, IF YOU FIND BROKEN LINKS OR HAVE SUGGESTIONS ON THINGS TO ADD.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO TO SUPPORT YOUTH IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

INTERIOR HEALTH'S YOUTH HARM REDUCTION TEAM :)

[YHRC@INTERIORHEALTH.CA](mailto:YHRC@INTERIORHEALTH.CA)

Last updated February 14, 2025

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOR SCHOOLS - PG 3,4

EDUCATION PROGRAMS - PG 5,6

FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS - PG 7

OVERDOSE (DRUG POISONING) RESPONSE - PG 8,9

SUBSTANCES AND HARM REDUCTION TIPS - PG 10,11

FIND HARM REDUCTION SERVICES PG 12

LEGISLATION AND POLICIES - PG 13

GUIDING DOCUMENTS - PG 14

STATISTICS AND REPORTS- PG 15

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT - PG 16

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION - PG 18

SEXUAL HEALTH - PG 17

OTHER TOOLKITS - PG 19

# FOR SCHOOLS



## Harm Reduction in Schools

[Why harm reduction? Key messages for schools - Interior Health](#): Key messages for schools on why a harm reduction approach is an important part of a comprehensive school health approach to substance use.

[Blue Print for Action - Preventing Substance-related Harms among Canadian Youth through a Comprehensive School Approach - Health Canada](#): Resource designed to inform comprehensive and concrete action plans and strategies at various levels of the Canadian education system (individual schools, school boards, school health organizations, among others) to prevent substance-related harms among youth.

[Policy Paper - Preventing Substance-related Harms among Canadian Youth through a Comprehensive School Approach - Health Canada](#): This policy paper describes issues related to youth substance use from a public health perspective and aims to inform action to prevent substance-related harms through school communities.

## Overdose Response in Schools

[Naloxone FAQ for Schools - Interior Health](#): Answers to common questions like – should we have naloxone onsite? Where can we get kits and training? What are the different kinds of naloxone?... and more.

[Overdose Policy Template for Schools - Interior Health](#): Policy template for schools to establish guidelines and procedures for the utilization of naloxone by staff members in response to an opioid overdose emergency.

[Naloxone Blue Kit Program for Schools](#): The Naloxone Blue Kit program is an Interior Health program to help schools prepare to respond to an opioid drug poisoning (overdose) on site. The program provides a free naloxone kit to schools who implement a comprehensive overdose response plan.



# FOR SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)



## **School Substance Use Policies**

### [Comprehensive School Substance Use Policy Check List – Interior Health:](#)

Check list to support schools in evaluating their substance use policies and practices.

### [Alternatives to suspension - Canadian Institute for Substance Use](#)

[Research](#): Promising practices available to schools seeking alternatives to suspension. Studies show implementing a range of strategies at multiple levels (e.g., administrative, school personnel, individual student) is likely to benefit not only individual students but also the broader school community.

### [Developing Healthy Drug Policies - Canadian Institute for Substance Use](#)

[Research](#): This document outlines how schools can implement substance use policies that focus on building connectedness and fostering social, emotional, and cognitive competence.

### [School policy assessment tool - Canadian Institute for Substance Use](#)

[Research](#): Tool to help schools assess their substance use policy and identify opportunities for improvement.

### [School policy process tool - Canadian Institute for Substance Use](#)

[Research](#): Outlines process to develop/revise school substance use policies.

## **Forms**

[Condom order form for Secondary Schools – Interior Health](#): Form for secondary schools to order free condoms. Also contains information on dispensers and safer sex resources.

**Looking for resources for classroom education? See [Education Programs for Youth](#).**



# EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## [Tips for Providing Substance Use or Sexual Health Education in Schools -](#)

[Interior Health](#): Whether you are Interior Health staff, a community agency worker or a teacher, planning education for students about sensitive health topics like substance use and sexual health can feel daunting. These tips can help you navigate these requests and encourage an evidence-based approach. Also included recommended resources.

## [Safety First: Real Drug Education for Teens - Interior Health and The US Drug Policy Alliance](#):

This 15 lesson evidence-based program empowers teens to reduce drug related harms by providing discussion of honest and scientifically accurate information. Originally developed by the US Drug Policy Alliance, it has been revised in 2023 by Interior Health's Youth Harm Reduction Program for use in BC. Safety First can be delivered as a partial or complete program. The lessons in Safety First align with components of BC's Physical and Health Education Curricular Competencies for Social and Community Health and Mental Wellbeing at the grade 9 and 10 level. The program is also appropriate for students in grade 11 and 12 and for use in youth groups and programs.



[Safer Partying Workbook - Interior Health](#): Adapted by the IH Youth Harm Reduction Team with permission from the amazing folks at BYTE Empowering Youth in Whitehorse Yukon, this workbook can be used as a complete program or as individual activities. It's ideal for older youth in school or for youth groups/programs in community. Topics include values exploration, harm reduction tips, drug knowledge, safer drinking, overdose response, safer partying scenarios/planning, and supports. [Powerpoint version](#) also available.

[Youth Cannabis Knowledge Hub - YMCA](#): Online hub for youth, young adults, parents and professionals providing evidence based information and resources in English and French, including self-guided educational modules about recreational cannabis use. The Hub aims to increase knowledge and skills related to reducing the harms of cannabis use and preventing problematic use.



## EDUCATION PROGRAMS (CONTINUED)

[iMinds - Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research](#): iMinds is a collection of resources for schools related to substance use and gambling. The lesson ideas fit well within the scope of BC's K-12 curriculum with its emphasis on core and curricular competencies. The collection includes specific competencies for drug literacy and gambling literacy.

[ABC's of Youth Substance Use - Funded by: BC Ministry of Health with support and input from the BC Ministry of Education and the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction](#): A British Columbia initiative to promote evidence-based approaches to youth substance-use education in schools. Includes recommended resources for the classroom and the community as well as professional development opportunities.

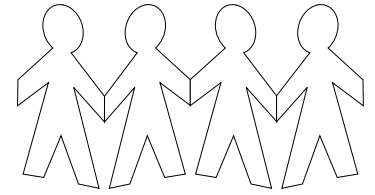
[Rethinking Conversations Around Youth Substance Use - Students Commission of Canada and Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health](#): A series of tools to share and integrate the current evidence and initiatives regarding the prevention and reduction of substance-related harms among youth. This multi-media asset consists of three videos: one for youth in grades 6 to 8, one for youth in grade 9-12 and one for adult allies and educators. There is also a discussion guide and a resources list.

[Cannabis and Mental Health -A joint project with the Schizophrenia Society of Canada's project Cannabis & Psychosis, YouthREX, and The Mental Health Commission of Canada](#): Contains a 90-minute online course that includes harm reduction tips for youth – developed by youth for youth. Also provides a mentor guide for educators, peer and youth workers, parents and allies.

[Sensible Cannabis Education – A Toolkit for Educating Youth - Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy](#): This toolkit responds to calls for the development of realistic and evidence-based cannabis education for 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.



# FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



## [Talking with Teens about Alcohol and Other Drugs – Interior Health:](#)

Guidance for parents, caregivers and youth workers about how to prepare teens to reduce risks when alcohol and other drugs are present

[For Families and Caregivers – Foundry:](#) Information on how to tell if a youth needs support, how to talk to youth about cannabis use and more.

[Parents Like Us - The Unofficial Survival Guide for Parenting a Youth with a Substance Use Disorder:](#) Written by parents for parents, this handbook may help you feel connected with other parents and caregivers going through similar experiences. Provides a starting point in the search for connection, understanding, support and resources.

[Holding Hope Support - Moms Stop the Harm:](#) Offers groups to support, connect, and share without stigma. The groups welcome parents, spouses, siblings, and friends whose loved ones, of all ages (including youth 12-24), use or have used substances. Holding Hope groups provide reassurance that caregivers are not walking this journey alone. They are a safe place to build strength and resilience to support loved ones.





# DRUG POISONING/OVERDOSE RESPONSE

## [Episodic Overdose Prevention \(eOPS\) Guide - BC Centre for Disease](#)

[Control](#): This protocol is intended to provide practical guidance for regulated and nonregulated health and social service providers to prevent and respond to drug poisoning in diverse settings across BC. The protocol includes information on providing services to youth as well as a handy eOPS checklist and a [Youth eOPS Services Quick Reference Guide](#).

## [Helping Youth who use Opioids - Video Series - Canadian Centre on](#)

[Substance Use and Addiction CCSA](#): The three-part plain language educational video series covers common questions about working with youth who experience harms from opioids. Addiction counsellors, mental health therapists, social workers and non-OAT practitioners will find great interest in this video series.

[Carry Naloxone - Get Ready - Get Trained - Save Lives](#): Excellent training video on recognizing and responding to an opioid overdose using both injectable and nasal naloxone.

[How to Save a Life Using Naloxone - Interior Health](#): Youth-friendly Infographic/Quick Reference Guide on how to use Naloxone.

## [Crossroads to Compassion Simulation - Canadian Centre on Substance](#)

[Use](#): Crossroads to Compassion is an interactive simulation story based on the experiences of young people who use opioids. It was created in partnership between CCSA and Alberta Health Services.





## DRUG POISONING/OVERDOSE RESPONSE (CONTINUED)

[Youth Informed Guide to Opioid Agonist Treatment - Foundry](#) : An animated, short, lived-experience video series about a young person's everyday experience with opioid agonist treatment (OAT) as part of a treatment program. The series explores the OAT process to demystify and destigmatize it, and to increase confidence for youth considering or starting OAT.

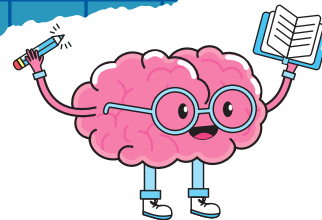
[Becoming an Opioid Harm Reduction Champion - Canadian Red Cross](#).

This free online course helps those age 13 and up share bite-sized messages (focused on reducing stigma and responding to an opioid poisoning emergency) within their personal and professional networks using social media and other tools.

[Youth Unregulated Drug Toxicity Deaths in British Columbia: January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2022 - BC Coroners Service](#)

This report reviews all accidental and undetermined youth unregulated drug toxicity deaths that occurred in B.C. between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2022. During that time, there were 142 suspected youth unregulated drug toxicity deaths. This review was completed through analysis of BCCS investigative records, toxicology reports, and post-mortem examinations, as well as through available medical and social service case records.





# SUBSTANCES AND HARM REDUCTION TIPS

## Drug Info Sheets - Interior Health

Honest information on the effects and risks of various drugs. No scare tactics - just facts. Harm reduction tips are also provided. Print and web versions.

- Alcohol: [print](#) - [web](#)
- Cannabis: [print](#) - [web](#)
- Psychedelics: [print](#) - [web](#)
- Stimulants: [print](#) - [web](#)
- Opioids: [print](#) - [web](#)



**Dance Safe:** Neutral, fact-based information on a variety of substances including: What is it? What are the effects? What are the risks? Harm Reduction tips to help reduce the risks.

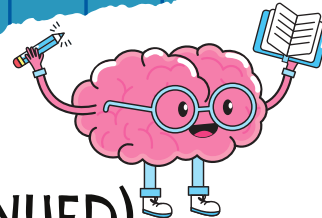
**Foundry BC:** Information about alcohol and other substances and how to reduce possible harms.

**Drugs and Mental Health - Youth Rise (International):** Excellent resource on the effects of using substances when also experiencing mental health challenges.

**The Blunt Truth – Useful tips about safer ways to use cannabis – Centre for Addiction and Mental Health:** Developed for youth by youth, this resource lets you know what science recommends to help reduce some of the risks to health and well-being if you choose to use cannabis.

**Talking Pot with Youth: A Cannabis Communication Guide for Youth Allies - Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction:** Provides introductory information and a set of exercises to engage youth in meaningful discussions and conversations about cannabis using harm reduction approach.





## SUBSTANCES AND HARM REDUCTION TIPS (CONTINUED)

[Trip! Project:](#) Trip! Project was born out of a need for appropriate drug and sex information within the Toronto rave scene. Provides safer drug use and safer sex information as well as neutral information on a variety of substances.

### MIXING

[Tripsit - Guide to Drug Combinations](#)

Reference chart that shows the risks of combining various drugs.

[The Blender - A Guide on Mixing Drugs and the Related Risks - AQPSUD](#)

Peer developed tool created in the spirit of harm reduction. Intended to inform about what different drug combinations can do in order to reduce the risk of fatal repercussions. Loads of information and a glossary to help understand "doctor's words".

### VERY TECHNICAL



[Erowid:](#) Extensive, in-depth library of information about psychoactive plants, chemicals and related topics.

[Psychoactive Substance Index - Psychonaut Wiki:](#) Extensive, in-depth resource provides unbiased information about psychoactive substances



## FIND HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

[Toward the Heart - Site finder](#): Use this handy tool to find out where you can get naloxone and harm reduction supplies in your community.

[Drugchecking.ca -Interior Health](#): Find drug checking services in your community. Read drug alerts, learn about drug checking and more.

[Supervised Consumption and Overdose Prevention Services - Locations](#): Find Interior Health's supervised consumption and overdose prevention sites.

[Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Service Directory](#): This resource provides an overview of the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU) services available in the Interior Health region - including harm reduction services.

# LEGISLATION AND POLICIES



## [FAQ - Providing Harm Reduction Services to Youth - Legal](#)

[Considerations - Interior Health](#): Interior Health document addresses common questions regarding consent requirements and duty to report a child in need of protection when youth are accessing harm reduction services. Provides practice recommendations for delivering youth harm reduction services.

[Infants Act](#): British Columbia legal document - Section 17(1) outlines a youth's legal ability to consent to health care services.

[Duty to Report: BC Ministry of Child and Family Development](#): Provides information on what service providers must to report under the Child, Family and Community Service Act as well as how to report.

[Good Samaritan Act](#): Information and a poster on the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act which provides some legal protection for individuals who seek emergency help during an overdose.

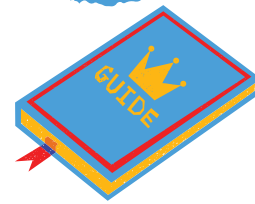
[AL0200 - Consent for Person's Under 19 years of age](#): Interior Health staff access only. Interior Health policy to ensure consent for persons under 19 years of age is congruent with provincial legislation, regulations and standards of professional practice.

[Advocacy - Representative for Children and Youth](#): Provincial advocate for children and youth receiving reviewable services or programs provided or funded by government.

[\(AL0600\) - \(Duty to Report Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect\)](#): Interior Health staff access only. This policy informs all Interior Health (IH) staff of their responsibilities where there are concerns for the safety and well-being of a child and/or where a child.



# GUIDING DOCUMENTS



[BC Harm Reduction Strategies and Services Policy and Guidelines - BC Centre for Disease Control](#): Provincial guidelines to support harm reduction strategies and services pertaining to substance use and sexual health. See Appendix 3 and [Guidelines for Providing Harm Reduction Services to Youth](#).



[Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder for Youth – Guideline Supplement BC Centre for Substance Use](#): This document is intended to supplement the BCCSU's A Guideline for the Clinical Management of Opioid Use Disorder with an overview of care principles and recommended treatment options for youth with an opioid use disorder (OUD).

[What makes mental health and substance use services youth friendly? A scoping review of literature - BMC Health Services Research](#): Study examines the literature available on youth-friendly services from the perspectives of youth, caregivers, and service providers. The main focus is to identify the characteristics of youth friendliness in substance use service settings.

[Healing Families, Helping Systems: A Trauma-Informed Practice Guide for Working with Children, Youth and Families – Ministry of Child and Family Development](#): Guide on advancing understanding and action about trauma-informed approaches that support program and service delivery for/with children, youth and families.

[Substance Intoxication and Withdrawal Guidelines - Child Health BC and BC Children's Hospital](#): Supports providers to deliver standardized, developmentally appropriate and culturally safe care for children and youth presenting to acute care settings with intoxication or withdrawal symptoms.



[Indigenous Harm Reduction Principles - First Nations Health Authority](#): Great visual document of Indigenous Harm Reduction principles and practices that can be used as a learning diagram to host conversations about addiction and harm reduction.

## STATISTICS AND REPORTS



[McCreary Centre Society – BC Adolescent Health Survey](#): BC-wide survey administered to youth in Grade 7 to 12 administered every five years since 1998. The survey gives an evidence base of youth health trends, emerging issues, and risk and protective factors for healthy development. Adapted versions of the survey are administered to youth whose experience may not be captured in the BC AHS including youth in custody, and homeless and street-involved youth, and youth in alternative education.

[Time to Listen – Youth Voices on Substance Use - Representative for Children and Youth](#): This report from the Representative for Children and Youth calls on the provincial government to develop a comprehensive system of substance use services capable of addressing the diverse needs of young people across British Columbia. The need for harm reduction to be a key component of this wrap-around system is among the recommendations.

[This is Housing First for Youth – A program model guide – Canadian Observatory on Homelessness/A Way Home Canada](#): The Housing First for Youth model is both an intervention or program model, as well as a philosophy guiding a community's response to youth homelessness.







## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

**Youth Harm Reduction 101 - Interior Health:** This four-session course covers essential information on integrating harm reduction principles, approaches and services into your practice when working with youth. It is recommended that service providers complete all four sessions.

NEW

- [Part 1: Youth and Substance Use](#)
- [Part 2: Harm Reduction Stigma](#)
- [Part 3: Harm Reduction Services](#)
- [Part 4: Legislation & Policies](#)

**IH STAFF:** Also available on [I-LEARN](#) platform - Course #4339.

**[Harm Reduction Fundamentals - CATIE:](#)** Excellent online course containing four units that can be accessed individually or completed together for a more comprehensive overview of harm reduction fundamentals: Unit 1: Setting the Foundation for Harm Reduction; Unit 2 Harm Reduction Principles and Practice; Unit 3 Drug Use, Health and Harm Reduction; Unit 4: Supporting Harm Reduction Service Capacity

**[Youth Substance Use Education Training Pathway - Interior Health:](#)** Interior Health staff access only. This document aims to support building knowledge and skills for clinicians to support the safe and effective care of youth who use substances.

**[Compass Toolkit: Youth Substance Use/Concurrent Disorders:](#)** BC Children's Hospital. Comprehensive toolkit providing evidence-based information and practical tools for the assessment and treatment of substance use and concurrent disorders among youth. Includes [harm reduction](#) information and strategies.

NEW

**[Compass Support/Clinical Consult Line - BC Children's Hospital](#)**

Service providers can call Compass for advice and support with mental health and substance use diagnostic clarification, medication recommendations and treatment planning. 1-855-702-7272

NEW



## SEXUAL HEALTH

[Sexual Health, Interior Health](#) : Information on STIs, HIV, birth control and emergency contraception, pregnancy testing, and resources for LGBTQ2S+, Aboriginal and youth populations.



[AMAZE](#) - Amaze lives up to its name. Fun animated videos with answers to all the questions teens and pre-teens have about sex and their bodies. Nothing is off-limits. Although US based their resources are used world-wide.

[Options for Sexual Health](#) : Options for Sexual Health is all about choice - services include sexual and reproductive health care, information, and education. Loads of info on sexual health, STIs, HIV, Hep C, contraception, pregnancy, abortion, gender, pleasure and more. Appointments can be booked online.

[Smart Sex Resource, BC Centre for Disease Control](#) - Contains information for youth and service providers on sexual health and STIs. Contains a Clinic Finder to help locate STI testing, contraception and other sexual health services.

[Project Respect](#) - Project Respect brings together youth and adults to create awareness and dialogue about sexualized violence by encouraging critical thinking about root causes.

[Teen Health Source](#) - Toronto-based website with great information about a sexual health, includes quizzes and self assessment tools, info on birth control, puberty, pleasure and more.



[Scarleteen](#) - Sex Ed for the Real World: Loaded with information Scarleteen is an inclusive, comprehensive, supportive source of info for teens and emerging adults about all things sexual health.

[Next Gen Men](#) - Trains, equips and empowers parents, educators, coaches, and youth workers to lead the next generation towards a better future, to anchor them to positive masculinities and offer them opportunities for connection and growth.

NEW





## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

[YouthCO:](#) YouthCO is an organization of youth leaders within the HIV and Hep C movements. This website contains excellent resources on colonization, inclusive and destigmatizing language, sexual health, harm reduction, stigma and more.

[Qmunity - Youth Resources:](#) QMUNITY is a BC non-profit organization that works to improve queer, trans, and Two-Spirit lives. Qmunity offers youth specific resources and a Queer Terminology Glossary.

[Trans Care BC:](#) Trans Care BC supports the delivery of equitable and accessible care, surgical planning, and peer and community support for trans people across the province.

[Diversity and Inclusion:](#) Interior Health staff access only. Information for Interior Health staff on a variety of topics related to diversity and inclusion: Inclusive Language Guide, Safe and Brave Spaces, staff education opportunities and more.





## OTHER RELATED TOOLKITS (INTERIOR HEALTH STAFF ACCESS ONLY)

[Harm Reduction Toolkit](#): General harm reduction information and resources for Interior Health staff.

[Naloxone Toolkit](#): Information on responding to opioid overdoses using naloxone for Interior Health Staff.

[Addressing Stigma Toolkit](#): Resources and support for Interior Health staff and physicians to understand the role that stigma towards people who use substances plays in creating barriers to care. It contains reports, courses, videos, assessment tools and practical strategies.

[Sexual and Reproductive Health Toolkit](#): This toolkit is for clinicians providing and supporting sexual and reproductive health services in Interior Health.



[Child/Youth Mental Health & Substance Use \(CYMHSU\) Toolkit](#):

This toolkit is intended to support Interior Health staff and physicians in providing care to children and youth with mental health and substance use struggles through clinical resources, decision-making tools, staff education and patient and family resources.

