



Cannabis legalization: guides for schools & communities



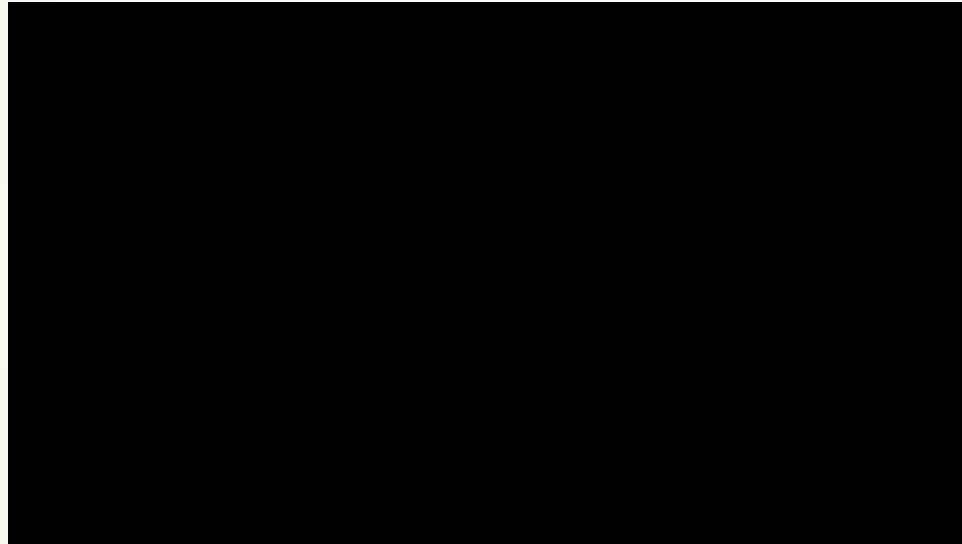
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BC Ministry of Health and Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research

PHABC Conference



Einstein's definition of insanity...





Upcoming setting-based guides for cannabis legalization

- Five settings: ***schools, communities, workplaces, post-secondary and retail.***
- In addition to conveying information on laws/regulations and health risks, the guides will:
 - include a few cautious mentions of ***benefits,***
 - invite deeper consideration of, and ***dialogue*** on, the nature, causes and consequences of cannabis/substance use,
 - ask the reader to think about the possible ***opportunities*** associated with legalization focusing on governance, culture and wellbeing,
 - suggest that there are important ***individual and collective responsibilities*** to consider during, and after, legalization,
 - caution against common ***pitfalls and distractions.***

Schools guide: Navigating change

Cannabis Legalization

CHANGE & OPPORTUNITY FOR SCHOOLS

GET CANNABIS CLARITY.CA

Cannabis regulations (continued)

Adults may not:

- give, sell or promote cannabis or cannabis accessories to anyone under the age of 19
- allow a minor to consume in a place under their control
- ask or allow a minor to purchase cannabis for them
- be impaired by cannabis while working
- use cannabis in vehicles or operate a vehicle while impaired by cannabis

Specifically for schools, under the Cannabis Control and Licensing Act, a person must not consume cannabis:

- in or on school property
- within a prescribed distance from school property

For more information see [Get Cannabis Clarity](#)

A teachable moment

Cannabis – like other psychoactive substances – has been used by humans for thousands of years. Legalization provides adults who use cannabis with a safe supply in a regulated setting. Cannabis use among youth is still prohibited. Yet the policy changes that affect adults can potentially help students develop a broader understanding of drug use, and skills related to drugs, in preparation for becoming adults.

Young people need to develop competencies that will allow them to grow and thrive in their communities. They will need to understand cannabis and how to make informed decisions about it as they grow up. Legalization offers schools a unique opportunity to advance students' educational goals, and help them develop critical thinking skills for life in an ever-changing world.

Some teachers, staff, and students may use cannabis despite the legal restrictions on age (19 or older) and school property (no use on school grounds or within a specified distance of a school). When these situations occur, they may be an opportunity for teachers and students to discuss the diverse nature of cannabis, who uses it, and why. An open discussion about legalization can help young people decide for themselves what role cannabis may or may not have in adulthood.

Reasons young people use drugs:

65% to have fun	30% curiosity	21% to deal with stress	16% to deal with sadness	3-4% pressure to use drugs
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Schools guide: Capitalizing on opportunity

Dialogue

Dialogue is a conversation in which two or more people seek to understand each other. While talking is a part of the conversation, listening and asking good questions are the more important skills. The goal is not to come away having convinced someone about something. It's about gaining understanding of another's perspective.

Dialogue is an important tool, especially as we enter an era of legalized cannabis. People have different perspectives on cannabis. We do not need to think and believe alike. However, we do need to live together. That requires that we understand each other and respect the needs and rights of others.

Open dialogue with all stakeholders in the school community—students, teachers, staff, parents, administrators and others—can help create a broad understanding of the views within our community. This understanding provides a critical foundation from which to develop shared approaches that respect everyone. Dialogue also helps participants develop the skills for the civil exchange of ideas so needed in democratic communities. In dialogue, we discover new ideas that allow us to evolve our thinking and become lifelong learners.

For dialogue resources see [Let's Talk Cannabis](#).



Opportunities for schools

Cannabis legalization offers a number of rich growth and learning opportunities for the entire school community. Below are some of the main ways schools can embrace and benefit from the changes taking place in our society.

Review and update policies

Now is an ideal time to revisit policies to ensure the whole school operates in a healthy way. A health-promoting school is "one that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working."¹

The role of health-promoting school policy is to establish an environment that facilitates learning by fostering a caring and inclusive community. A healthy school involves all members of the school, not just students. A health-promoting school includes learning through relationships and interpersonal interactions, inside and outside the classroom.

Policy related to particular cannabis use issues should be aligned with the overall aim of school connectedness. Being shared and consistent about connectedness will empower students with the skills and confidence they need in the adult world, where drug use is common. School policy related to staff, students and parents can all contribute to building connectedness that supports health.

Health-promoting school policy supports teachers and other staff. It seeks to assist them in facilitating learning, offering guidance and providing exemplary models. Staff are able to form strong and healthy relationships with students. Teachers play a critical role in student development by encouraging them to be curious, attentive and collaborative. With legalization, issues related to cannabis may be examined with the same curiosity and appreciation for honest, open dialogue as any other complex topic. This is no time to call in external "experts" to tell students what they are supposed to think or believe.

¹ World Health Organization, "What Is a Health Promoting School?" 2016, https://www.who.int/school_health/guide/1-1.

In relation to cannabis, critical thinking gives students the power to manage their well-being. Ways schools can help develop critical thinking related to cannabis include:

- Having open conversations about cannabis and drug use that encourage students to apply the same critical skills they use to learn about other topics inside and outside of school
- Asking more questions that encourage reflection and dialogue, rather than stating a "fact" which tends to shut down conversation or spark unproductive debate
- Using existing curriculum to explore the human phenomenon of drug use while exploring different cultures and historical periods, or drawing attention to allusions to drugs in literature or other texts, nurtures critical thinking about drugs in a wide range of learning contexts

Critical drug education

The legalization of cannabis provides schools with an opportunity to build drug literacy. Drug literacy is the knowledge and skills needed to navigate our physical and social world, in which cannabis and other psychoactive substances play a part.

Effective drug education is about helping students develop competencies that increase their ability to manage their own well-being. This skill is vital in a world in which cannabis and many other drugs are available. Some of the critical competencies, as defined by the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, include:

- assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies
- explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs. bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks, benefits and harms related to drugs



Since drug use has been integral in human history and development, these competencies cut across all subject areas. Opportunities abound in English Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics, among others. Traditional drug education efforts have not been successful partly because they have focused on drugs themselves rather than the place of drugs in past and present human societies.

Suggested resources:

- [SearchC](#) (search for "cannabis" or "drug education")
- [BIBIS](#)
- [Cores](#)
- [OPHEA Cannabis Resources \(Ontario\)](#)

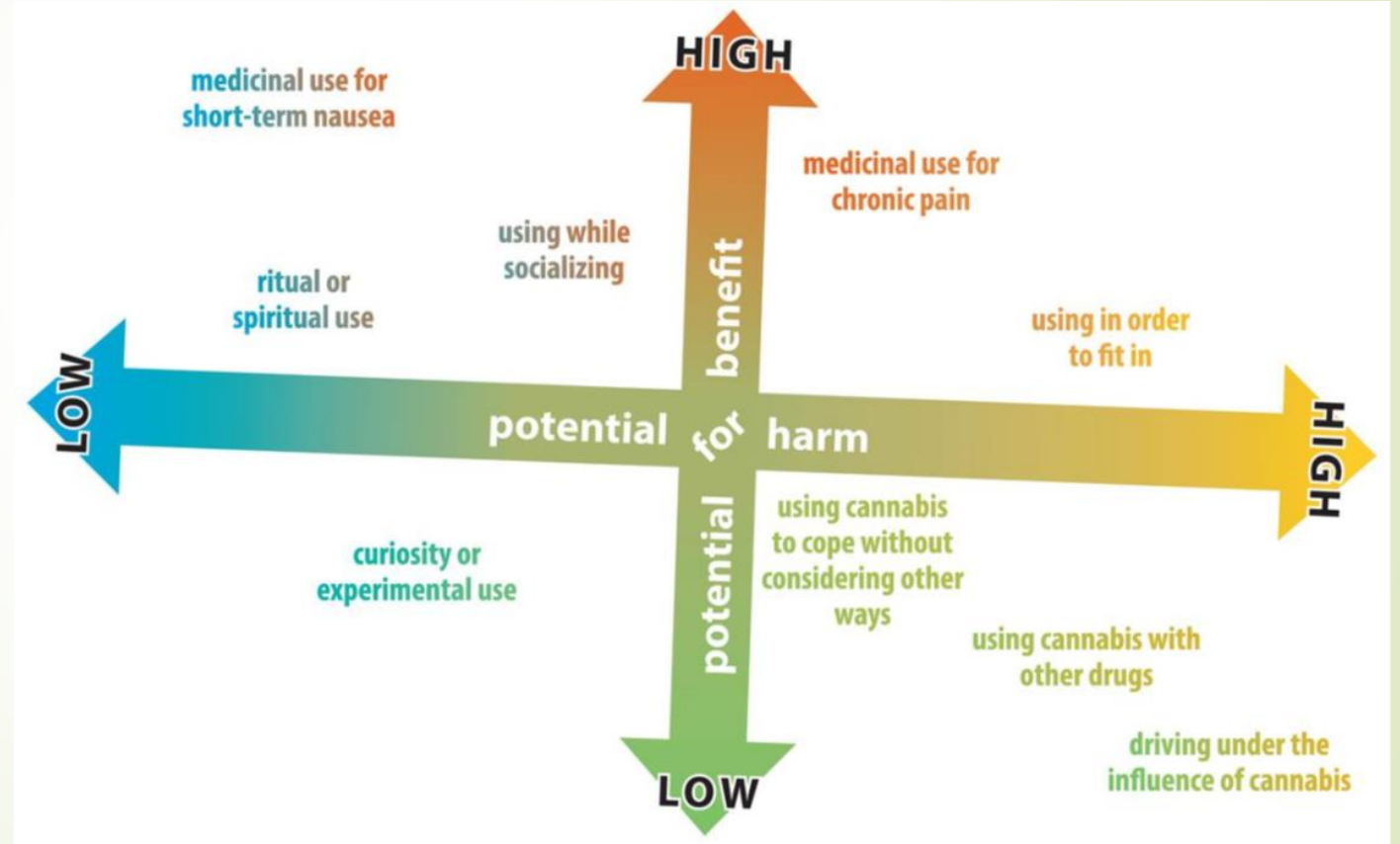


Critical drug education?

- ▶ Overarching goal is to **educate so that students become more skilled at managing their own well-being.**
- ▶ Need to recognize the **potential pitfalls of taking an overly protective approach**
- ▶ Relevant (safer substance use) competencies identified from CISUR research:
 - ▶ assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies
 - ▶ explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
 - ▶ recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
 - ▶ develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks, benefits and harms related to drugs

Reconceptualizing risk

- ▶ *assess the complex ways in which drugs impact health and well-being*
- ▶ *explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs*
- ▶ *recognize binary constructs and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues*



A practical tool for self-assessing personal substance use

- ▶ develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks, benefits and harms related to drugs

	Connecting	Disconnecting
Internal	Use that facilitates <i>intra</i> -personal connection - integration	Use that increases fragmentation within the self
External	Use that facilitates healthy <i>inter</i> -personal connection	Use that harms our relationships isolating us from others



Final points



- ▶ Guides will be available from the Healthlink BC and Get Cannabis Clarity websites in the coming weeks.
- ▶ Our intention is that they will provide high-level guidance for those seeking to advance our approaches to managing cannabis use to optimize benefits and reduce harms.
- ▶ The retail guide in particular is stretching us due to the “unnatural” policy divide between medical and non-medical cannabis and “uneasy” relationship with the emerging industry.
- ▶ The opportunity, as we see it, is to use the “once in a lifetime” occasion of cannabis legalization to evolve our approaches toward those that may facilitate personal and collective maturation and greater individual and collective wellness.



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