

Creating a Healthy School that supports: Alcohol/Marijuana – Free Living

Alcohol

Alcohol is the second leading risk factor for death, disease and disability. Since the brain is not fully developed until people are in their mid-twenties, alcohol use before the age of 25 can damage the brain and lead to long-term problems with judgement, problem solving, impulse control, decision making and dealing with emotions.

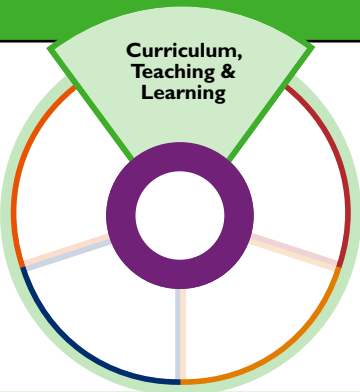
Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience a number of difficulties, including problems in school (e.g. higher absence rates and failing grades), legal problems (e.g. an arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk), physical problems (e.g. hangovers or illnesses), unwanted, unplanned, and unprotected sexual activity, higher risk for suicide and homicide, alcohol-related injuries (e.g. burns, falls, drowning and car crashes), abuse of other drugs, and death from alcohol poisoning. Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines recommend that youth delay alcohol use until they are in at least their late teens and that they follow the provincial legal drinking age laws. The legal drinking age in the province of Ontario is 19.

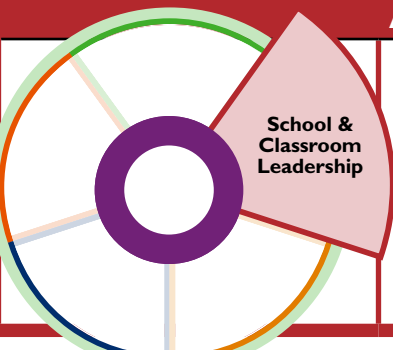
Approximately 41% of Durham Region students in Grades 7 & 8 and 68% of secondary students state that they have used alcohol in the past year.

Marijuana

Research shows that youth use marijuana by smoking, inhaling, eating, or drinking it. The mind altering component of marijuana, called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), that youth today are using has been found to be up to 400% stronger than the marijuana used just decades ago. Marijuana use can lead to long-term health effects such as psychosis, damage to the brain (e.g. permanent problems with memory, reaction time, concentration and the ability to learn), lung damage and lung cancer. Marijuana contains many of the same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco smoke.

In Durham Region, 31% of secondary school students state that they have used marijuana.

	At the School	In the Classroom	Student
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information about alcohol and marijuana misuse in all relevant courses. Combine this education with refusal and social skills training • Offer teachers the opportunity to attend workshops/training on alcohol and marijuana misuse • Provide students with information on alcohol and marijuana misuse through newsletters, posters, assemblies as well as on the school's website and social media accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide classroom discussion time after assemblies or during campaigns that deal with substance misuse at the school • Develop the learning goals for the alcohol/marijuana-free living portions of the curriculum with the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students provide input into the messaging that will be used throughout the school to teach about alcohol and marijuana misuse • Have students create a school-wide campaign that addresses the harmful health effects of alcohol and marijuana • Get students involved in developing curriculum updates

	At the School	In the Classroom	Student
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an alcohol/marijuana-free living policy for the school that is based on local school board policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a classroom environment where students are free to discuss the issues they may be facing in regards to alcohol and marijuana. Start by making it a part of the rules that everyone is to be heard and that no question is a bad question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students take the lead on completing the assessment of the school's needs related to alcohol/marijuana-free living • Encourage student-led initiatives that raise awareness about substance misuse • Develop student-led support groups in collaboration with guidance teachers and youth workers

	<p>At the School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make students aware of substance misuse prevention efforts in their community that they can get involved in • Include youth on various school committees (e.g. school improvement committee, safe school committee) 	<p>In the Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students write letters to government advocating for bans/restrictions on media that promotes alcohol to youth and young adults • Have students write letters to politicians about marijuana controls/current political trends 	<p>Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students get involved with the Healthy Schools team to help create the alcohol/marijuana-free living plan • Ensure student involvement in all activities/initiatives related to alcohol/marijuana-free schools activities
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	<p>At the School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete awareness raising activities • Ensure that the materials used in the school depict healthy choices • Encourage parents and school staff to be positive role models • Create a safe and supportive place at school for youth to hang out • Offer current information related to substance misuse onsite as well as information on community resources that deal with the topic 	<p>In the Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display posters and resources about the harmful effects of alcohol and marijuana in classrooms, and throughout the school, which refer students to the onsite resources as well as to community resources 	<p>Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students coordinate and/or participate in efforts related to creating and sustaining an alcohol/marijuana-free school environment (e.g. create a presentation, have a display table, participate in political advocacy)
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	<p>At the School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with your school's public health nurse or other community organizations to organize community awareness activities • Involve parents in initiatives that promote alcohol/marijuana-free living at the school • Create school-wide messaging which includes messages for parents (e.g. create newsletters, have information on school website, and have resources available during parent/teacher nights as well as SCC meetings) 	<p>In the Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with community agency information that can help them if they or someone else has an addiction • Invite community partners to provide ongoing support at school events and in the classroom 	<p>Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students connect with community agencies that can provide assistance with school plans to raise awareness about the issues
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Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

durham.ca/schools



If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729