

Focus on Youth

Canada's Drug Strategy is the federal response to the harmful use of substances. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, inhalants and solvents. The Strategy takes a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for, and the supply of, drugs and substances. It contributes to a healthier, safer Canada through prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction initiatives.

Healthy Decision-making through Education

In addition to its focus on reducing the demand for drugs in general, Canada's Drug Strategy places a special emphasis on working to decrease the prevalence of drug use among youth. The 2004 Canadian Addiction Survey showed that 90% of Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24 had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months. Almost 30% of 15 to 17 year olds and 47% of 18 to 19 year olds reported using marijuana in the 12 months preceding the survey. Acknowledging that many youth do experiment, the goal is to increase the age at which young Canadians begin experimenting with drugs and alcohol.

In consultation with Canada's Drug Strategy partners, Health Canada has an ongoing public education campaign to inform youth, in a non-judgemental way, about the harmful effects of marijuana, alcohol and other substances and to encourage healthy decision-making. This education campaign includes a new information booklet, *Straight Talk About Marijuana (2005)*, to facilitate dialogue on marijuana between parents and youth.

The public education campaign has also developed an interactive website for youth. The *Be Drug Wise* website gives detailed information on the substances most widely used by youth and also addresses specific issues such as driving while impaired and methamphetamine. The website is based on the most reliable existing evidence regarding health, social and legal consequences, and provides a creative forum for learning and school-based topics. It is also an important vehicle for youth engagement.

Prevention and Harm Reduction

The Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund promotes awareness of substance issues and provides support for the development of national, regional and community-based solutions to the harmful use of substances. The Fund provides funding to communities across the country for health promotion and prevention initiatives as well as programs aimed at reducing the harm associated with drug use, such as outreach to the hard-to-reach street youth population.

Treatment and Rehabilitation


While treatment is primarily a provincial and territorial responsibility, Health Canada shares the cost of some treatment and rehabilitation programs for specific groups such as youth and women through the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Rehabilitation Program. Through this Program, Health Canada also works to build knowledge in the area of treatment and rehabilitation and has produced a series of best practices documents aimed at treatment service providers, program planners and policy makers. Topics range from a focus on youth and women to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and driving while impaired offenders.

Engaging Youth

A youth engagement round-table was held in February 2005, at which young people aged 14 to 25 years from across Canada joined professionals in the field to share views on the best ways to promote youth involvement in Canada's Drug Strategy's health promotion and prevention activities. The results of this round-table will guide the development of youth engagement groups to assist government, and its partners to effectively reach out to youth. Also important is an ongoing role for youth in the development and implementation of public and professional education, communications and community capacity building initiatives

Health Canada's website for youth and substance use issues is located at <http://www.drugwise.gc.ca>





*To learn more about Canada's Drug Strategy,
please visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds*

*Find out what governments, non-governmental
organizations, and other partners are doing –
National Framework for Action – Visit
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa*