

Cannabis Dialogues in the K-12 System in British Columbia

Context

The federal government has introduced the [Cannabis Act](#) with the intention of legalizing and regulating cannabis by the summer of 2018. Even though cannabis use has been relatively common among the Canadian population, this represents a major and rapidly-evolving shift in public policy.

Let's Talk Cannabis is a national project funded by Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program, and being undertaken by the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR, formerly CARBC) at the University of Victoria.

The goal of the project is to engage communities across Canada in dialogue about cannabis and cannabis policy to facilitate mutual understanding. The project team will work with jurisdictions and communities to develop a range of resources to support and promote dialogue relating to cannabis and cannabis policy in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to those jurisdictions and communities.

The Ministry of Health is the project's jurisdictional partner in BC and has identified three priority settings for cannabis dialogue activities: K-12, post-secondary and the industry-regulator interface.

In dialogue, the goal is to leave the conversation with a new understanding. Unlike many other forms of public communication (e.g., debates or negotiations), dialogue is not meant to lead immediately to agreement or action. Instead, the hope is that participants will come away from the conversation with a better understanding of the subject, of each other and of themselves. Dialogue nurtures an optimal environment for good decision-making.
From [Let's Talk Dialogue](#), CISUR

The K-12 Opportunity

CISUR and the Ministry of Health are looking for one or more school districts willing to partner on planning and implementing cannabis dialogues within local settings. Modest funding is available to support these activities, in addition to significant central and inter-partner support and access to new tools. Participation will also provide opportunities to explore philosophies of drug education and a chance to impact the way cannabis is discussed among students, teachers, administrators, parents or other community members. Greater understanding between and within these groups will provide a better foundation for emerging policies and norms.

Expectations

Participation in this project will require some demonstration of commitment from the school district (e.g., sponsorship by Superintendent). Interested school districts should email an expression of interest to kristinajenei@uvic.ca with

- Identification of the school district,
- Name and email of a contact person, and
- A brief description of current misunderstandings that divide members of the school community (e.g., within or between students, teachers, administrators, parents or other community members).

The expression of interest does not need to include a specific plan for the dialogue activities. Those details can be worked out in consultation with CISUR and other K-12 partners.