

## Cannabis legalization and Yukon schools

As of October 17, 2018, cannabis will become legal in Canada. The legal age to use, possess, cultivate or purchase cannabis is 19 years of age.

### Cannabis legalization and your work in schools

You should be having grade-appropriate conversations with your students to teach them about the risks of cannabis use, as well as the use of alcohol and illegal drugs.

You can find relevant information on the legalization of cannabis at <https://www.yukonschools.ca/learning-opportunities.html> to inform the conversations you are having with students in the classroom. You can also contact Jane Gaudet at the Department of Health and Social Services at 393-6907 or [Jane.Gaudet@gov.yk.ca](mailto:Jane.Gaudet@gov.yk.ca) with questions on speaking with students about the use of cannabis and other substances.

Yukon's curriculum has grade-appropriate learning outcomes from Kindergarten to Grade 12 related to the use of harmful substances such as poisons, prescription medications, alcohol and cannabis, as well as fentanyl and other illicit drugs. At each grade level, the expectations for student learning in the Physical and Health Education includes:

- **Kindergarten to Grade 3:** avoiding harmful substances such as poisons found in household cleaners or prescription medications found in the medicine cabinet.
- **Grades 4 and 5:** managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, understanding the potential effects and harms of psychoactive substances such as cannabis and strategies for preventing personal harms.
- **Grade 6:** responding to emergencies and strategies for managing personal and social risks related to psychoactive substances and potentially addictive behaviours.
- **Grade 7:** strategies to protect themselves and others from potential abuse, exploitation and harm in a variety of settings.
- **Grades 8 to 12:** healthy choices and their influence on physical, emotional and mental well-being, managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use and how advocating for mental health and well-being of others connects students to the community.

It is the responsibility of all school staff to ensure students learn in a safe environment. The use of cannabis continues to be prohibited on school grounds for students and



staff. You cannot be at school if you are impaired. If you consume a cannabis or other substances in your personal time and come to school impaired, you may be sent home.

### **Talking with students about cannabis**

When talking with students about cannabis and other substances:

- Be open, calm and ask questions. Do not blame, shame or lecture.
- Ask what they have heard about cannabis, fentanyl and other drugs.
- Kids are experts about their worlds. Listen and learn.
- Tell them you care about them. Speak from your heart.
- Help them make healthy decisions. Focus on your concern for their safety.

The [Cannabis Talk Kit](#) from [Drug Free Kids Canada](#) provides a useful resource that can help you start the conversation with your students.

### **Health effects of cannabis**

The health risks of cannabis use are higher in younger users and when used more often and for longer periods of time. Its use can be harmful for youth brain development and has been linked to the development of psychosis and schizophrenia, especially when use begins in adolescence. Cannabis can be addictive, with about 1 in 11 people who use cannabis becoming addicted, which rises to about 1 in 6 for people who started using cannabis as a teen.

### **Substance use supports**

If you suspect a student is having an issue with the use of cannabis, or any other substance, please refer them to your school's guidance counsellor or a Department of Health and Social Services alcohol and drug services counselor.

### **Find out more**

For more information about the Yukon's approach to the legalization of cannabis, visit [yukon.ca/cannabis](http://yukon.ca/cannabis).

