



CLARITY ON CANNABIS

A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and
Educators of Youth in Grades 10 - 12.

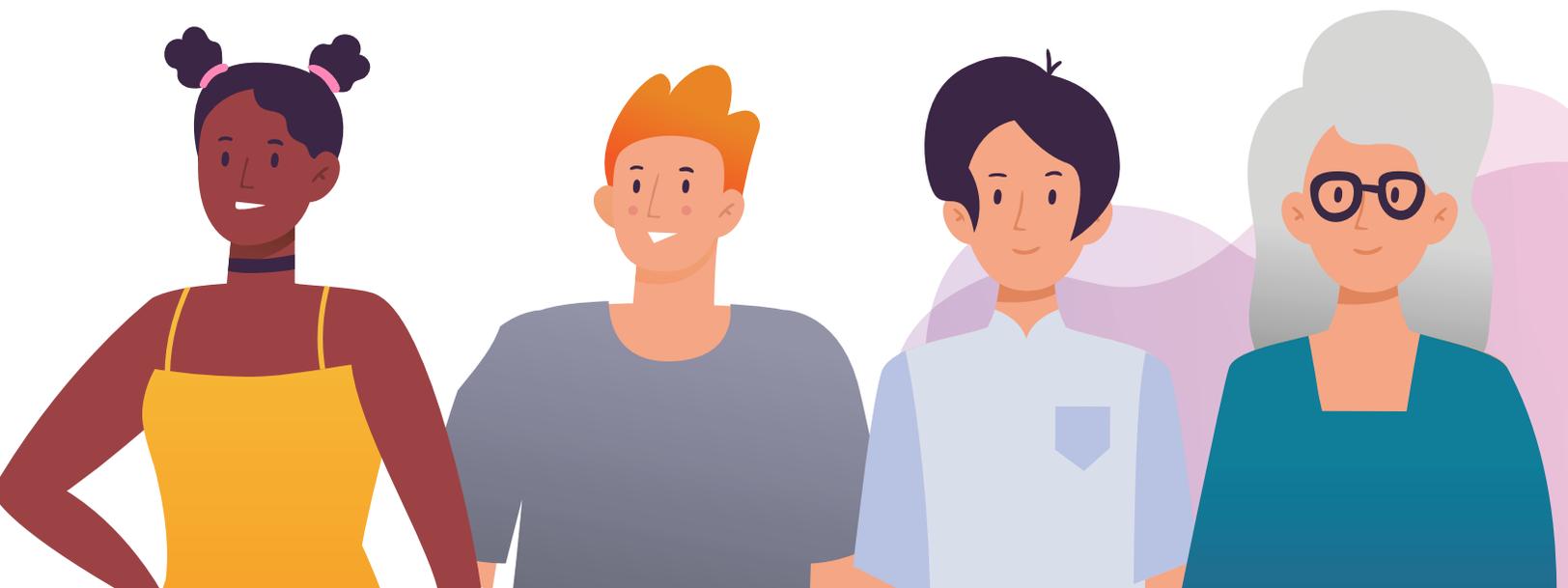




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What the Exhibit Offers

According to Statistics Canada, approximately 44% of youth will try cannabis. That's almost 1 in every 2 young Canadians! Clarity on Cannabis is a virtual rural community that show various real-life scenarios where youth can encounter/interact with cannabis. As youth go through the town's scenes, they will watch videos, read information, and answer short questionnaires on cannabis' uses, its potential harms/risks, and various tools they can use when navigating social pressures when it comes to cannabis.

This is a non-judgemental space that moves away from a "just say no" approach to one that raises awareness on cannabis' potential risks and harms, as well as providing alternative coping tools and strategies for youth who choose to use cannabis

WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

Harm reduction acknowledges that people do use substances. The goal is to minimize the harms and risks of use rather than simply ignoring or condemning it.

HOW TO CONVEY THAT MESSAGE TO PARENTS/ GUARDIANS?

It is understandable that harm reduction might be concerning to parents and guardians. They want to keep youth safe and "just say no" may appear to be the best way, but it isn't a realistic or a wanted suggestion for many youth.

Research shows that at least 44% of youth will try cannabis. Without knowing or understanding the associated risks and how to mitigate those risks, youth can be left in a more dangerous situation. Harm reduction can look like:

- Assigning a designated driver
- Parents/guardians allowing underage youth to consume alcohol under



their watch or that of a trusted adult

- Smoking outside and away from others

Harm reduction is often used and is proven to work to lessen the consequences of more risky behaviours. If your goal is to keep youth safe, then harm reduction is an effective tool.

Educators may employ an opt-in system for parents and guardians if they do not want their youth to go through Clarity on Cannabis. However, it is strongly suggested that parents/guardians have access to the virtual exhibit as they can experience it and learn about cannabis to be better prepared to discuss and answer questions with youth.

What this Guide Offers

This guide is a tool for educators, parents, and guardians to increase your knowledge on cannabis to better prepare yourselves for questions around cannabis. In addition, the guide will provide context, a sample lesson plan, and some questions with answers to common questions.

PRE & POST ASSESSMENT

Before youth even begin the virtual Clarity on Cannabis Exhibit, make sure they know they are in a safe space. These values should be:

- What's discussed here, stays here.
- Everyone has a different relationship with substances. Being funny or crass about these issues can make some feel uncomfortable.
- Respect all questions.





UTILIZING A GROUP SETTING TO HAVE OPEN DISCUSSION IS PREFERRED. QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOUTH GO THROUGH THE VIRTUAL EXHIBIT:

- What do you think about cannabis?
- Can you list positive, negative, and neutral aspects of cannabis.
- What do you want to learn about cannabis?

Once youth go through the exhibit they may want a debrief session to talk about what they learned. Open ended questions are best at this point and can look like:

- What did you think of the virtual exhibit?
- Did anything stand out to you?
- Were you surprised by any of the information?
- What would you have liked to see?

The most important thing we found through focus groups was youth wanting an open and honest discussion.





Sample Lesson Plan

Clarity on Cannabis fits nicely within the CALM curriculum for wellness choices, but can also be utilized in any class.

Objective & Learning Outcomes

Increase youth awareness on the potential risks and harms of cannabis in a way they can take seriously.

Learning Outcomes:

- Making an informed choice about their wellness
- Learning different tools to manage stress and anxiety
- Recognizing when someone is having a negative cannabis experience and how to help them.

Materials & Resources

Time: Up to 60–65 minutes total (5–10 minute intro, 30–45 minute activity, and 10 minute debrief). We encourage flexibility, especially if youth want to debrief longer.

Technology Requirements: Stable internet connection and access to smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer.

Intro

Describe the virtual exhibit: An interactive rural town with different scenarios that will inform youth about cannabis. You can access it through the provided link and there are 5 scenarios with activities and one library with resources used. It is expected the exhibit can take you anywhere from 30–45 minutes depending on how engaged you are with it.

Activity

Visit clarityoncannabis.org

Lesson Closure

Once youth have finished it is very important to offer a debrief session. Utilize the Q/A section below or the provided resources to help inform your answer. It is important that youth only receive correct information so if there is an answer you're unaware of- be sure to check the resources.





The Exhibit

Highschool Scene

ANSWERS SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS:

- What is cannabis?
- What effects does it cause and how?
- Harm reduction recommendations.
- How to help someone who is greening out.

Cannabis Store Scene

ANSWERS SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS:

- How do people ingest or inhale cannabis?
- What are the different effects of inhaling and ingesting?
- Is vaping safe?

Bedroom Scene

ANSWERS SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS:

- Is cannabis bad for my mental health?
- Young adults brain development and when is a brain fully developed?
- The link between cannabis and psychosis and schizophrenia.
- What are different ways to cope and manage stress and anxiety?
- What are some benefits of meditation?
- How can you use breathing to calm down?

BBQ Party Scene

ANSWERS SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS:

- What are the different reasons people use/don't use cannabis?
- How to read a cannabis label?
- How to casually say no?



Bush Party Scene

ANSWERS SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS:

- What are the consequences of driving while high?
- What are the steps of being pulled over?
- How does law enforcement determine if you are sober or not?
- Information about the legalization timeline.

Library

Links to all our resources, mental health tools, and emergency mental health numbers for youth!

It is strongly encouraged that teachers, educators, parents, and guardians go through the exhibit first. You will be better prepared to answer questions and might learn a few new things about cannabis!

Common Questions & Potential Answers

These questions can be difficult to answer so use below as a guide as you know that youth better and can provide a well-rounded answer to them.

Q: CANNABIS DOESN'T EVEN AFFECT ME LIKE THIS. WHAT'S THE POINT OF THIS?

A: Knowledge is everything and how cannabis affects you can also change. Just because you had a positive experience, doesn't guarantee that your friend(s) will have the same exact experience. If you end up in a situation where someone near you is greening out/has taken too much, it's important to know what to do to be able to help them out.



Q: IS CANNABIS SAFER THAN ALCOHOL?

A: These are two different substances so it's difficult to do a side-by-side comparison. Some things to keep in mind are: the variety of cannabis products and the effects of ingesting vs inhaling are different among people; the body's reaction to weed and alcohol even differ from person to person. With all this in mind, currently long term effects and the potential for misuse are slightly more common with alcohol. Cannabis still has its risks, especially when consuming/ inhaling before the age of 25.

Q: ALL MY EXPERIENCES (OR MY FRIENDS) HAVE BEEN POSITIVE, WHERE IS THE POTENTIAL HARM?

A: Everybody can react differently to cannabis. There are a wide range of experiences that go from positive, neutral, to negative. Things to consider: what was the THC concentration? How often do they/you use? Remember, just because they've/you've had a good experience doesn't mean it's going to remain that way, and consuming high THC and using daily increases your risk of future complications.

Q: I CAN TELL WHEN WEED IS LACED, SO STREET WEED IS FINE.

A: Street weed is not regulated and has been found to contain things like pesticides, fungicides, heavy metals, and mold. You also don't know the THC amount and will have varying experiences, especially if it's high THC and low CBD. Nevermind if it's laced with something else, there are other things that make it not-so-great for your health.





Other Resources for Youth

We are just one of many amazing resources out there. It is encouraged that you check out the resources below for additional information and to continue the conversation around substance use and youth.

Cannabis-Specific

- Weed Out the Risk - wotr.ca
- Youth Cannabis Awareness - youthcannabisawareness.ymcagta.org
- Get Sensible - getsensible.org
- What's With Weed? - whatswithweed.ca

Mental Health-Specific

- Cannabis and Mental Health - www.cannabisandmentalhealth.ca
- Kickstand - mykickstand.ca
- Wellness Together Canada - wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA

Resources Used in this Exhibit

References and Information Used to Build Clarity on Cannabis

Literature reviews on Canadian youth perceptions on cannabis and effects of cannabis on mental health can be requested.

- 10 Ways to Reduce Risks to Your Health When Using Cannabis, CAMH, www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdfs---reports-and-books---research/canadas-lower-risk-guidelines-cannabis-pdf.pdf
- About cannabis, Health Canada, www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/about.html
- Canadian Center on Substance Abuse (2017). Canadian Youth Perceptions on Cannabis. Accessed from www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/



[files/2019-04/CCSA-Canadian-Youth-Perceptions-on-Cannabis-Report-2017-en.pdf](https://www.ccsa.ca/files/2019-04/CCSA-Canadian-Youth-Perceptions-on-Cannabis-Report-2017-en.pdf)

- Canadian Youth Perceptions on Cannabis, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, January 2017 www.ccsa.ca/canadian-youth-perceptions-cannabis-report
- Cannabis and Mental Health – Priorities for Research in Canada, Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2019 www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2019-07/Cannabis_mental_Health_Summary_july_2019_eng.pdf
- Cannabis: Inhaling vs Ingesting [infographic] used with permission, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2019 www.ccsa.ca/cannabis-inhaling-vs-ingesting-infographic
- Edibles Dosing Chart, Leafly, www.leafly.ca/news/cannabis-101/cannabis-edibles-dosage-guide-chart
- El Sohly et al. (2016). Changes in Cannabis Potency over the Last Two Decades (1995–2014) – Analysis of Current Data in the United States. *Biol Psychiatry*. 2016 April 1; 79(7): 613–619. doi:10.1016/j.biopsych.2016.01.004 www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26903403/
- Exploring the Link, www.cannabisandpsychosis.ca
- Guide to Facilitate Discussions about Youth Cannabis Use in Your Community, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, September 2016
- Harm Reduction for Non-Medical Cannabis Use, Canadian Nurses Association, January 2018. www.cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/harm-reduction-for-non-medical-cannabis-use.pdf?la=en
- Is cannabis safe to use? Facts for youth aged 13–17, Health Canada, www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/drugs-health-products/is-cannabis-safe-use-facts-youth.html
- Marijuana DrugFacts. National Institute on Drug Abuse. www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana
- RCMP Subject Matter Expert, Spring 2020.
- Sensible Cannabis Education A Toolkit for Engaging Youth, Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy, 2018 www.cssdp.org/uploads/2018/04/Sensible-Cannabis-Education-A-Toolkit-for-Educating-Youth.pdf

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- Springboard Cannabis 2.0 Presentation, February 19, 2020
 - Talking Pot with Youth: A Cannabis Communication Guide for Youth Allies, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction www.ccsa.ca/talking-pot-youth-cannabis-communication-guide-youth-allies
 - What to do if you green out, Aurora Medical, www.auroramedical.com/blogs/news/what-to-do-if-you-green-out#:~:text=2,or%20excessive%20amounts%20of%20caffeine
 - Vaping 101: What is it and How Does it Work? Ontario Cannabis Store. www.ocs.ca/blogs/facts-about-cannabis-consumption/what-is-vaping
 - Weed Out the Risk- Facilitators Guide 3.0, Summer 2019, Weed Out the Risk- Module The Eff XRAY

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the rural youth who helped shape and informed the development of the exhibit. We'd also like to thank our many partners and contributors listed below.

- Amplomedia
- Bailey Acres Design
- Canadian Centre on Substance Use & Addiction
- Olds High School
- Pulp Studios
- RCMP "K" Division
- Schizophrenia Society of Canada
- Strathcona Girls & Boys Club
- The Camrose Open Door
- Weed Out the Risk

This initiative was made possible with the support of Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.