

Fact Sheet for Parents: Understanding Youth Drug Use and Overdose

Langley Child & Youth Mental Health Substance Use Local Action Team

According to the BC Coroners Service, there were 142 suspected youth unregulated drug toxicity deaths in BC from 2017-2022, which equals about 24 deaths a year. Unregulated drug toxicity is now the leading cause of unnatural deaths among youth.

Overdoses are increasingly linked with fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times more toxic than morphine. As little as a few grains worth is enough to cause overdose or death. There is no way to know if a drug is safe or if it contains a lethal amount of fentanyl or other contaminants. Taking opioids in combination with other drugs or alcohol makes an overdose more likely to occur.

Drugs don't discriminate: anyone can overdose. Stigma is a contributing factor, as people often hide their use from those around them. Whether your child experiments with drugs for the first time or uses regularly, serious harm or death is a real possibility.

In November 2023, Guy Felicella (www.guyfelicella.com) will present at some of Langley's Middle and High Schools to educate youth on harm reduction, drug policies, prohibition and the stigma that surrounds mental health and addiction. The goal is to equip youth with knowledge, tools, and connections that will help them to understand the realities of the current overdose crisis and make informed decisions into the future. Guy's aim is to empower youth to think critically, build connections, and reach out for help from the right people, instead of turning to drugs.

What can I do?

- Look for opportunities to talk with your child about risks, including around school events or graduation;
- Listen to them and respect their opinion. If they see you as a good listener, they may be more inclined to trust your input. Give them room to participate and ask questions. Communicate that your main concern is their well-being;
- If your youth is using drugs, you may feel anger, sadness, fear or confusion. Those are natural reactions. Focus on facts rather than emotions. If overwhelmed, reach out for support from an expert in the community or at school;
- Educate your child about what to do in an emergency. Let them know they will not get in trouble calling for help;
- Do not keep secrets about substance use inside families. If you are worried, reach out for help sooner rather than later. The longer a problem develops, the bigger it becomes and the harder it is to deal with, especially with substance use. Keeping substance use a secret, could have deadly consequences;
- If you are taking prescription opioid medications, alert your children what the medications are for and store them safely away; and
- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of an overdose at the Fraser Health link provided below.

Protective factors that can decrease your child's risk of using drugs include:

- Connect with your child through various avenues (ie. games, activities, sports) and provide consistent support;
- Regularly check in with your child, ask them to share thoughts, feelings and concerns;
- Involve your child in decisions that impact their lives; and
- Provide a safe, stable, nurturing environment and relationship for your child.

Where can I get more information?



Fraser Health: <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/mental-health-and-substance-use>
Mental health and substance use resources, information, and services.

Here to Help: <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/>
Mental health and substance use self-help resources and personal stories.

Kelty Mental Health: <http://keltymentalhealth.ca/substance-use>
Provincial resource centre for mental health & substance use information, resources, and peer support for youth & families.

Community Resources & Supports:

Encompass Support Services Society www.encompass-supports.com 604-534-2171
Provides activities and supports that are designed to build new skills, foster healthy productive lifestyles and improve access to services within our community. Services are low barrier, all-inclusive and are free to participants. Specific programs have been adjusted to accommodate community needs and are focused on enhancing access for all participants.

FamilySmart www.familysmart.ca 604-878 3400
Offers free Parent Peer Support Workers who can provide emotional support, information, resources and help in navigating services for all parents and caregivers with a child or youth with mental health and/or substance use challenges.

Foundry www.foundrybc.ca/langley 604-546-2700
Offers young people 12-24 and their families/supporters, free and confidential access to mental health and substance use support, primary care, peer support and social services.

Fraser Health www.fraserhealth.ca/familysupport
Mental health and substance use resources, information, and services for family members.

Langley Community Services Society (LCSS) Substance Use Services www.lcss.ca 604-534-7230
As an outpatient service, the LCSS Substance Use Program provides information, education, counselling and referrals for youth and adults attempting to create change regarding their personal substance use problems. Services are also available for individuals ages 5+ who are affected by someone else's substance use problem. Treatment includes individual and group work, as well as aftercare support. A harm reduction approach (which could include abstinence) is used, tailoring treatment to the needs and goals of each client. Take-Home Naloxone kits (and training) are also available.

Langley Youth Hub <http://www.langleyyouthhub.com> 604-546-1130
The Langley Youth Hub delivers outreach services to youth 12-24 on a 1-1 basis, in local schools, and in the community, providing access to basic needs, connection to community resources, finding safe housing, and access to substance use supports.

Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society www.lfvas.org 604-427-2664
Offers counselling for youth aged 15-29 years on Tuesdays in their office at 20685 56 Ave. and a School's Out Club at select schools for self-identifying indigenous youth to support their self esteem, sense of belonging, and school success, through promoting positive peer relationships, cultural teachings, homework support, and fun. Call to register and learn more about their other youth services.

Pacific Community Resources Society www.pcrs.ca 604-312-5866
ASTRA Outreach Substance Use Counselling for Youth
ASTRA supports youth aged 13-19 with substance use concerns, providing supportive and relational counselling services based on their needs, readiness, and commitment to change. The program meets youth on a one-to-one outreach basis in their communities. ASTRA counsellors follow a bio-psycho-social-spiritual perspective to help youth reach goals that promote wellness around problematic substance use.

Substance Use Prevention & Health Promotion Program jarthurs@pcrs.ca or 236-889-4581
The prevention program supports youth 10-19 aiming to prevent, delay and reduce the harm associated with substance concerns. Facilitators support and promote healthy lifestyles with youth both in schools and the community through awareness presentations, group work, individual mentoring, and recreational activities. This regional program has facilitators in several locations throughout the Fraser Region.

Substance use day treatment: D.E.W.Y. (Day Evening Weekend Youth) dewyprogram@pcrs.ca or 604-992-3303
DEWY supports youth aged 13-19 who wish to address their substance use by providing them with a community treatment program. The program combines a mixture of therapeutic group process, intentional recreation activities and individual counselling. Working from evidence-based practice, the four pillars of DEWY's approach to supporting recovery include mindfulness practice, relapse management, values-based living and enhancing motivation towards recovery.

Project Resiliency www.sd35.bc.ca/programs-initiatives/project-resiliency/
Project Resiliency is a strength based, supportive assessment and intervention available to all Langley School District secondary students. Project Resiliency is a three-day counselling-based program that offers young people the opportunity to address whatever might be preventing them from achieving their full potential.

