

UBC Vancouver Student Substance Use Plan

Latest Revision: December 2022

Compiled by the UBC Vancouver Substance Use Education Community of Practice (2019)

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Introduction:

The national and local context has undergone a number of changes in the last 5 years: ongoing deaths due to opioid accidental drug poisoning, the legalization of cannabis in Canada in 2018, the rise of vaping, and the normalization of alcohol use on campus. University campus communities and student services must engage in dialogue, education, harm reduction, substance use health, recovery and support for their students, staff, faculty and community members.

There are many groups and organizations, on and off campus, contributing to substance use education, harm reduction and substance use health, policy advocacy and support at UBC. The UBC Vancouver Student Substance Use Plan outlines the approach of VP Students and Student Health & Wellbeing regarding substance use and the campus community. The plan focuses on key areas: policy, education & culture, and substance use health, including harm reduction, recovery & supports.

Created by the Substance Use Education Working Group from May 2018 – 2019 (now known as the Substance Use Education Community of Practice) and revised the fall 2021, this plan is designed as a guide by which students, staff, faculty, educators, programs, student groups and leaders to respond to current and emerging needs of our students. The substances covered by this plan include, but are not limited to:

- Alcohol;
- Cannabis;
- Stimulants;
- Opioids;
- And other substances as determined

This plan is maintained and executed by Student Health & Wellbeing within the VP Students portfolio, alongside campus partners and the Substance Use Education Community of Practice. The plan will be annually reviewed and goals assessed by the Substance Use Education Community of Practice.

Vision

All UBC students deserve access to physical, mental and substance use health services, supports and resources to help them live well and have a flourishing life. This includes education and policies that enable a community to support all its members regardless of where they are across a spectrum of use.

Foundations of this plan

1. Socio-ecological model & Systems based approach: The socio-ecological model is a foundational approach in community culture change and health promotion fields. At UBC, the Wellbeing

Strategic Framework and Okanagan Charter work from this approach. In the case of substance use education in a post-secondary setting, approaches will need to target all levels of the model. At UBC, the institutional layer, there is significant potential to impact the community through policy changes and substance use health resource investment. Each of the layers will be considered in how we approach and provide education to students to build individual and community capacity as well as allyship for those with lived experience. Enacting this plan will require various touchpoints at all levels throughout a students' experience on campus.

2. Reducing stigma: Stigma is "a negative social, political, and cultural attitude toward a group or individual with a distinguishing attribute or behaviour, founded on a deeply held set of false beliefs, and involving overt and covert judgement, oppression, and discrimination." Reducing stigma on all forms of substance use must be foundational through all our approaches in order to enable wellbeing, services & supports in this plan.
3. Substance use health: Substance use health is "an expression adopted by organizations of people with lived and living experience to focus attention on the unique, unmet health service and support needs of people who use substances, which should be considered and addressed in the same way as mental health or physical health needs." Everyone deserves to have the services and supports to help them live a full and flourishing life.
4. Harm reduction: This plan recognizes that substance use occurs across a spectrum that ranges from no use to ongoing use. Harm reduction as an approach aims to reduce risks of substances, and aims non-judgmental and non-coercive, though this is not always the case in practice. This approach seeks to meet students where they are at, and may include, but is not limited to: sharing messages about how students can use substances in a safer way, increasing accessibility and knowledge about drug testing locations and naloxone kits, and increasing literacy about recovery, health care and treatment options.
5. Equitable & Intersectional: UBC has many plans and priorities to ensure the equitable participation of all students in the campus community. Many who have or currently use substances are in groups that have been historically, persistently or systemically marginalized and excluded from institutions like UBC and their substance use may exacerbate this experience. An equitable approach to ensuring substance use health must be at the forefront of our practices with students who are on the spectrum of use. This requires concurrent actions of undoing of these systemic factors. Many identity dimensions, including mental health, disability, gender, race and class are all interconnected and any education and support for substance use health must be intersectional to address all.

Note: This plan is not endorsing prevention messaging or enforcement, which are included in the Four Pillars plan of the City of Vancouver and the Federal Government's Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy. The history of prevention messaging has been rooted in assumptions, not evidence, and has often been harmful, stigmatizing and shame-based. This messaging has resulted in negative outcomes such as isolation, riskier use and fear of reaching out for supports or help. The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act and upcoming decriminalization in BC negates the need for enforcement and the focus of any interaction with Campus Security will focus on individual and community safety, and first aid for anyone in need (accidental drug poisoning, other adverse drug reactions, etc).

Our Three Approaches:

1. Policy

Policy enacts the institutional layer of the socio-ecological model as to what is accepted, funded and resourced at the university. Advocacy at the policy level will ensure campus policies, including the current alcohol policy, smoking and vaping policies, as well as related policies like housing and accessibility are rooted in substance use health and reducing stigma on our campus. Substance use is a systemic public health issue, not an individual, criminal or punitive issue, and this shift in mindset must also be embedded throughout other UBC policies and plans, including the Wellbeing Strategic Framework, Students Strategic Plan, Inclusion Action Plan, Indigenous Strategic Plan and more.

UBC Policies related to substance use: Alcohol Policy; Smoking and Vaping Policy; Sexual Misconduct

2. Education & Culture

Substance use education at UBC will be informed by the plan's foundations: systemic, reducing stigma, substance use health, harm reduction and intersectional. Education will be integrated throughout all UBC and focus not only on individual harm reduction, but also interpersonal and community levels, which involves increasing awareness and capacity for all members of the UBC community.

Some examples of types of learning outcomes for education to the campus community include:

- Know about harm reduction strategies for substances across a spectrum of use
- Know resources and where they can find information about substance use & supports
- Recognize signs of a substance use problem
- Acknowledge the role stigma, colonization and systemic racism plays in one's own understanding of substance use & addiction
- Reflect on one's own boundaries as they apply to their experience of substance use
- Know how to support a student in recovery

All education offered recognizes that there will be students with various backgrounds, experiences with and attitudes about substances. A literature review discusses a variety of approaches to education, available in Appendix B. Education can include a variety of modalities including Canvas courses, social media campaigns, websites, workshops, training sessions and conferences. Groups can best determine how and when are the best times to disseminate this information depending on the audience.

- Age & Context Appropriate Content
- Social Norming
- Drug Literacy
- Safer Use & Harm Reduction skills
- Allyship & Community Care

3. Substance Use Health

All UBC students deserve access to physical, mental and substance use health services, supports and resources to help them live well and have a flourishing life, regardless of where they are across a spectrum of use.

i. Harm Reduction Supplies

To support those who use substances' wellbeing, supplies must be made available and accessible to the campus community, depending on the relevant needs. Resources, supplies and education will be made available for individuals, event organizers, community members, as needed.

Some examples of this could include but are not limited to:

- Alcohol: Ensuring water is available at all venues, non-alcoholic beverages, and food, as per the campus alcohol policy
- Cannabis, tobacco and vaping: Having designated smoking areas on campus, as per policy and Smoke Free areas guidelines
- Non-regulated drugs harm reduction: Fentanyl test strips, drug checking services, as well as naloxone kits easily available on campus

ii. Recovery & Support

Students who need supports related to recovery and/ or treatment need multiple types of modalities in order to meet a variety of needs. Support for those whose substance use may be problematic or otherwise negatively impacting them, which is not limited to those who fit the criteria for a substance use disorder. Supports are also needed for those individuals and communities experiencing loss and grief related to overdose or accidental drug poisoning, and supporting those who are in recovery.

These can modalities can include, but are not limited to:

- Peer to Peer support
- Support groups
- Recovery communities
- Peer mentorship
- Clinical support

Evaluation & Research

Evaluation of these goals and of this plan will be an annual action undertaken by Student Health and Wellbeing. Partners including the Substance Use Education Community of Practice and Student Advisory Committee will also have opportunities to provide input or feedback.

Data from numerous sources will contribute to this evaluation, including but not limited to:

- Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey
- Canadian Post-Secondary Alcohol and Drug Survey
- Current initiatives evaluation

Campus researchers are potential collaborators and partners.