

Program Description

What's With Weed?

Introduction:

What's With Weed is a peer-led secondary school program that is delivered by senior high school students to help students in grade 9 or 10 recognize and reduce, avoid, or prevent problems with marijuana use.

This program provides secondary schools with effective tools to address marijuana use with its students. It helps students identify not only potential problems but also positive behavior change strategies connected with marijuana use.

What's with Weed supports a harm reduction approach and follows a stages of change model to encourage users to move from pre-contemplation to action to avoid, reduce, or prevent problematic marijuana use.

Background:

Parent Action on Drugs initiated the project *Youth to Youth, The Risks and Realities of Marijuana Use* in conjunction with youth treatment and health promotion partners. The goal of the project was to reduce problematic marijuana use among Ontario youth ages 15-18.

In the first year of the project, a program model "What's With Weed" was piloted at seven high schools in Ontario. The model included developing activities and resources to support the program goals and to engage high school youth in discussions about risks, potential problems, and ways to reduce, avoid, or prevent these problems. Problematic marijuana use was defined as any use which is causing problems for the user including problems with friends, family and school work. In Year Two, communication tools were developed based on the information received from youth in Year One.

In 2012, the Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention Committee, a sub-committee of the Western Injury Prevention Coalition, submitted a proposal to the Western Regional Wellness Coalition to purchase this program for delivery in Bonne Bay, Port aux Basque, Burgeo, Stephenville and Corner Brook.

Purpose:

The **Goals** of this program are:

- Increase awareness of the potential for problematic marijuana use with teens
- Provide effective youth-to-youth strategies for addressing the risks and realities of marijuana

- Promote a stages of change model as a support for users who want to reduce potential risks

Target Audience:

This program is aimed towards youth in Grades 9 and 10. The program is unique, as it is meant to be inclusive of both users and non-users of marijuana. The program supports a preventive education approach that allows every individual to choose a course of action for themselves and identify strategies to reduce, avoid, or prevent problems.

Budget:

This program has been purchased by the Western Injury Prevention Committee (a subcommittee of the Western Injury Prevention Coalition with a grant from the Western Regional Wellness Coalition. The program delivery budget may include lunch and peer incentives for the training day for peer educators, nutrition breaks and incentives for the youth workshop, and program materials (paper, pens, etc). The cost to deliver this program should not exceed \$200.

Evaluation:

All aspects of the program have been evaluated. It has been tested and evaluated in seven schools in urban and rural settings in Ontario. The full report and evaluation results are available from www.parentactionondrugs.org. Key findings from the Ontario pilot project include:

- 38% of senior students reported that the program changed their minds about the risks of marijuana use “a little” to a “great deal”
- 66% of Grade 9 students reported that their assembly and workshop had changed their minds about the risks of marijuana use “a little” to “a great deal”
- Over 70% of Grade 9 students reported satisfaction with the classroom workshops run by peer educators
- Grade 9 students’ awareness of specific helping supports in school and in the community was increased significantly

Indicators:

- Pre- and Post-Test for participants of the workshop
- Peer Educator Feedback form.
- Observation by Peer Educators of younger participants during workshop

Requirements to Support Staff:

This program is listed on the Western Health website (www.westernhealth.nl.ca/mha) and can be borrowed. The human resource component consists of staff time for training, preparation, and delivery of this program. The program is usually delivered by

Youth Outreach Workers in the Region. The Mental Health Promotion Consultant and Regional Prevention Addiction Consultant are also available to consult and support implementation and delivery of this program.

Description of Activities:

What's with Weed is a program designed to engage students in a youth-to-youth marijuana prevention program within a school community. The successful delivery of this program involves key individuals including (1) Program Coordinator, who will take the lead for all activities and deliver the training workshop for the peer educators (a teacher, support person at the school, youth counseling staff, etc.); (2) Stages of Change Facilitator, who will provide support to youth who want to talk about problematic marijuana use; and (3) Peer Educators, who should be interested senior students who are recruited through the volunteer recruitment assembly.

The program model includes a strategy for recruiting senior students as peer educators and a training day for the senior educators, which will provide instructions on delivering a 75 minute workshop to their younger peers about the real risks of marijuana use and ways to reduce the risk.

Timeline/Action Plan:

The program model has eight phases. Each of the eight phases is outlined in detail in the Coordinator's Guide. It is recommended that all steps be implemented. It is important to take the time up-front to explain the program to administration, staff, and parents and to complete a full training with peer educators.

Phase One: Initial meeting with school administration: Discuss local Statistics and supports, core value of the program, potential dates for parent meeting, staff meeting, senior recruitment day, etc.

Phases Two/Three: Staff and/or parent meeting: Appendices # 2 and # 3 in the Coordinator's Guide have been prepared to support these meetings. It is important during these meetings to explain that this is a harm reduction program and ensure they understand the implication of this. Handouts for staff and/or parents can be distributed at this meeting.

Phase Four: Senior student recruitment to identify the peer educator volunteers: This occurs in order to explain the program to senior students in a special assembly. They are then invited to volunteer to be What's With Weed peer educators.

Step Five: Training day with peer educators: If possible this day should be planned away from the school at a local community center, church hall, etc. Lunch should be provided for this day.

- Step Six: Review and practice time for peer educators: It is important that the peer educators have time to review and practice the activities. The three activities associated with this phase include: review the workshop, practice time, and review for the junior assembly.
- Step Seven: Assembly for younger students, involving the peer educators: This phase is to introduce younger children to the program, the peer educators and plans for the workshop. There is a peer educator script included in the Coordinator's Guide.
- Step Eight: Workshop for younger students delivered by peer educators: This is a 75 minute workshop. A package of resources to support the activities is given to the peer educator teams.

Sample Outline of Peer Training Day

Introductions	Nametags; PowerPoint presentations (on CD Disk) "Problems and risk with weed" and "Strategies to reduce problems/risks with weed"
Warm-up/Icebreaker	Copies of Marijuana Medley activity sheets; small group work
Knowledge about marijuana	Open ended discussion to identify the risks that are commonly recognized by this group of Peer Educators
Attitudes about marijuana use	4 Corners activity – to provide a non-judgmental forum for differing opinions and values about marijuana use
BREAK	Continue to compile a clear list of the risks and safety strategies that have been discussed and agreed to by the majority of Peer Educators; ensure Peer Educators know the changes when they come back from break
The Stages of Change	Open-ended discussion to discuss problem solving and to identify common strategies and resources to reduce, avoid or prevent problems; define the Stages of Change Facilitator's role.
Choosing key risks, key strategies and key messages	Based discussion so far, what will the key messages be? (form consensus so Peer Educators can take ownership)
LUNCH	
Facilitation Challenges – Skills for working	Skill-building on how to handle the

with younger children	challenge of classroom work
Choosing teams and speakers for junior assembly	Give copies of Peer Educator scripts for junior assembly; Peer Educators take ownership for the format of their workshop and junior assembly
Review of Grade 9 Workshop outline	Skills development for delivery of the workshop for younger students
Introduction to new activities	Practice activities for their workshop presentations that were not already discussed or practiced
Review of workshop for younger children	Copies of "Roles and Responsibilities Record"; Teams identify activity leaders
Promoting the key message and Stages of Change Facilitator	Team-building to empower Peer Educator Teams to develop a tool to market the key message and ways to promote the Stages of Change Facilitator
Closing and reminder of next steps	Set a date and time for the review and practice time

Sample Outline of workshop with students presented by peer educator teams

Introduction	Introduce Peer Educator Team and the key messages
Setting group rules	
Knowledge (give them the facts)	"Marijuana Medley" handout; get in groups and answer questions about marijuana in two minutes.
Attitudes (discuss their opinions)	"4 Corners" activity to challenge and draw forth reflections based on opinions.
Skills	Discuss way to REDUCE, AVOID, OR PREVENT problems; small group exercise "Design a Student"
Closing	Complete Evaluations