



# The Blueprint for Action In Practice - Activity #1 Handout

## SECTION 1

01

### Upstream Prevention

Outlined below are examples of **upstream prevention initiatives** that connect to the four components of the Comprehensive School Health framework.

### Teaching and Learning

1. Weave social-emotional learning into curricula to enhance students' skills related to self-awareness, empathy, communication, self-regulation, and conflict resolution.  
*Example activity: [Cross The Line](#)*
2. Work with your school teams and administration to adapt curricula to improve students' health literacy skills (including mental health) as well as healthy decision-making skills, and enhance their ability to find, appraise, and understand health information.  
*Example activity: [Refusal Skills](#)*
3. Share with your students how environments shape behavior.  
*Example activity: [Design A Habit-ABLE Environment](#)*

### Social and Physical Environment

1. Work with your administration and fellow teachers to promote and expand the range of extra-curricular programming available to students (for example, intramurals, events and clubs) to reflect students' diverse interests and identities. Unsure what to add? Start by asking your students!  
*Example initiative: [Cochrane Healing Arts Time \(CHAT\) Program](#)*
2. Enable students to create and decorate safe, inviting, and inclusive communal spaces within the school for their use during breaks or after school activities.  
*Example initiative: [Dr. Clark Indigenous Healing Garden](#)*



3. Facilitate opportunities for adults within the school community to serve as formal or informal mentors, providing youth with guidance, social, and emotional support.

Example initiative: [Pod C.A.R.E – Character and Confidence, Attitudes, Relationships, and Empathy Program](#)

4. Advocate to administration for the establishment of a morning welcome program that encourages staff and students to come together in a welcoming, inclusive environment to socialize and share a meal or a snack.

Example initiative: [Soft Start Welcomes](#)

## Policy

1. Advocate to administration to create a committee to assess existing school policies, including the school's vision and mission statement, to identify whether these policies facilitate students' overall health and wellbeing, decrease risk factors, and enhance protective factors. This committee should ensure the development and enforcement of policies that foster a safe and inclusive school climate for all, while discouraging bullying, harassment, stigma, and discrimination in all its forms.
2. Within your subject area department, co-develop soft policies that weave in Blueprint approaches while remaining balanced with existing school-wide policies and connections to [Comprehensive School Health](#).
3. Co-create classroom norms with your students to support a positive classroom culture that helps students feel safe and included.

## Partnerships and Services

1. Facilitate and promote diverse part-time work and volunteer opportunities for students within community organizations or events. For example, local food banks, community bicycle co-ops, art centers, lending libraries, culture festivals, and code-a-thons.
2. Develop partnerships between schools and community athletics and recreation centres to increase access to a wide range of programming for youth. For example, offering reduced rate workshops, hosting wellness retreats, or an open house for students and their families.

Example initiative: [Mental Wellness Retreat Day](#)

3. Invite local partners such as public health professionals into the school for workshops as part of various events, such as a wellness fair or school open house.



## SECTION 2

02

### Harm Reduction

Outlined below are examples of **harm reduction initiatives** that connect to the four components of the Comprehensive School Health framework.

#### Teaching and Learning

1. Share youth-specific recommendations such as [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#) and [Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#) through posters, class discussions, and pamphlets.
2. Prioritize substance use education as part of health education course allocations to enhance students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to a healthy lifestyle and decisions surrounding substance use.  
*Example activity: [Navigating Nicotine Dependence](#)*
3. Use a "train-the-trainer" model to equip youth to facilitate safe, non-stigmatizing peer-to-peer discussions on harm reduction strategies that students have used or seen in their own lives.  
*Example activity: [Words of Warning](#)*
4. Talk to your administration about the option for your school to host community information sessions on the [Good Samaritan Act](#), emphasizing its central public health and safety objectives.
5. Implement classroom activities focused on harm reduction.  
*Example activity: [Harm Reduction Blogs](#)*
6. Explain harm reduction in terminology that makes sense for your students.  
*Example language: [Why Harm Reductions for Schools](#)*



## Social and Physical Environment

1. Work with a student leadership group to create and display print materials designed by and for students (for example, meme posters) that feature harm reduction messaging in common spaces within the school. Click to view an [example print material](#).
2. Work with administration to have safe disposal containers that school community members can access to safely dispose of vapes, needles, razors, broken glass or other "sharps". Ensure messaging to parents is also included in the role out of safe disposal containers.

## Policy

1. Talk to your administration about a review of school policies to identify which ones align with and can help implement harm reduction-oriented initiatives and objectives within the school community.
2. Advocate for school-level Good Samaritan policies that prevent the punishment of students or other members of the school community who call for emergency help in response to a potential substance use poisoning or overdose on school property.
3. Work with your administration and fellow teachers to develop classroom harm reduction-oriented policies, such as a policy that encourages students to speak with their teacher or another trusted adult in the school before or after class if they are struggling with their substance use and without fear of reprisal or punishment.
4. With parents and your administration team, consider supporting the draft of a statement about harm reduction for including on your school's website.
5. Create a Comprehensive School Substance Use Policy Checklist.

Example checklist: [Comprehensive School Substance Policy Checklist](#)

## Partnerships and Services

1. Invite local pharmacists or first responder into the school to give a presentation on how to effectively recognize and respond to a suspected drug or alcohol poisoning.
2. Partner with local public health nurses working in harm reduction service centres (for example, supervised consumption sites and managed alcohol programs) to increase youths' awareness and understanding of these services that exist in their community.
3. Ensure resources on reducing risks related to substance use are shared with parents and caregivers throughout the school year.

Example resource: [Youth vaping prevention resources](#)



## SECTION 3

03

### Stigma Reduction

Outlined below are examples of **stigma reduction initiatives** that connect to the four components of the Comprehensive School Health framework.

#### Teaching and Learning

1. Enhance school health curricula to include classroom activities that counter common misconceptions about substance use and about people who use drugs.  
*Example activity: [Addiction Mind Map](#)*
2. Teach students about the importance of person-first language (for example, "person who uses drugs" vs. "drug user") and other strategies for reducing stigmatizing language, and challenge students to practice these strategies through various class activities.  
*Helpful resource: [Communicating about Substance Use](#)*
3. Request from administration anti-racism, anti-homophobia/transphobia and anti-oppression and implicit/unconscious bias training for school staff and volunteers, given the intersections between substance use stigma and other forms of stigma.
4. Provide bystander training to students to support them in safely intervening in situations of abusive, isolating or stigmatizing behaviour online and in "in-person" contexts.

#### Social and Physical Environment

1. Ensure print materials and other media used or displayed within the school (for example, posters and videos) do not portray stereotypes about substance use or people who use substances.
2. Designate "safe zones" in school communities where youth can ask questions and seek support for substance use-related issues without fear of reprisal or judgment, and identify these spaces with a poster or sticker (for example, similar to the rainbow flag for 2SLGBTQ+ allyship).



## Policy

1. Identify existing school policies that aim to connect students and other members of the school community with supports related to substance use, mental health or other aspects of their health and wellbeing. If they don't exist, work with administration to advocate they be added.
2. Advocate for administration to reform existing school policies that may perpetuate systemic substance use stigma, including punitive "zero-tolerance" policies and those that promote fear, guilt and shame.

Example resource: [Alternatives to Suspension](#)

## Partnerships and Services

1. Invite individuals (for example, young adults who recently were in school) with lived or living experience of substance use to give a presentation to students on their experiences and coping strategies related to stigma, and to offer social support and mentorship to students.
2. Work with administration to offer accessible workshops and learning opportunities for parents/families designed to increase understanding of substance use topics, mitigate stigma, and help prepare them for discussing substance use with their children.



## SECTION 4

04

### Equity-Oriented Approaches

Outlined below are examples of **equity-oriented initiatives** that connect to the four components of the Comprehensive School Health framework.

#### Teaching and Learning

1. Educate students on Indigenous history, including the multigenerational impacts of colonization and colonialism and the resilience of Indigenous peoples in Canada, reflecting and building on school curricula in these areas.
2. Educate the school community on the impact adverse childhood experiences and trauma have on an individual's brain development, learning and social interactions, through use of the [Brain Story toolkit](#) and other evidence-based resources.
3. Provide workshops or resources to deepen understanding of the many cultural groups represented in the school and how to provide culturally safe care/education.
4. Ensure you are familiar with students' unique backgrounds to provide education based on needs (for example, being familiar with a student's Individualized Education Plan, speaking with school counsellor or social worker).
5. Provide space for education about empathy and remind students that substance use among non-users can be uncomfortable to be exposed to and if usage does occur, that respect for peers is given. For more on empathy, watch this [Empathy Video](#).
6. Incorporate the differences between commercial tobacco and sacred tobacco into a lesson plan as part of overall substance use education.

Supporting resource: [Sacred Tobacco](#)

#### Social and Physical Environment

1. Ensure all students have a work environment that is conducive to their unique needs (examples include quiet areas, music, lighting, and other elements of a sensory-friendly environment) as well as spaces for sharing challenges such as navigating nicotine dependence.

Example initiative: [Cochrane Healing Arts Time \(CHAT\) Program](#)



2. Cultivate physical environments that invite students of all genders, races, sexual orientations, cultural groups, abilities, and social classes to feel safe and welcome (for example, Gay-Straight Alliance clubs, peer support circles).
3. Ensure the school and surrounding area is accessible to all students (for example, through installing ramps and elevators, giving students extra time to get to class or activities).
4. Work with your administration to find solutions to things like vaping in school washrooms, ensuring that all students feel safe and comfortable within those spaces.

Example initiative: [School Profile - Nackawic High School](#)

## Policy

1. Identify existing school policies that support equity and help to address inequities related to health or social matters.
2. Work with administration to design policies that integrate the unique and diverse views and needs of all students so all are students feel accepted, heard, and respected.

Example initiative: [Time to Listen: Youth Voices on Substance Use](#)

3. Adapt policies to be more equity-oriented (for example, removing disciplinary policies that may re-traumatize students, allowing different styles of learning and testing).
4. Include a [restorative practice](#) lens to improve existing policies.
5. Apply a [Gender-Based Analysis \(GBA\) +](#) approach to policy development and review.

## Partnerships and Services

1. Support students and other school community members to participate in the [KAIROS Blanket Exercise program](#), which seeks to foster truth, understanding, respect, and reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
2. Partner with private sector organizations offering extracurricular activities that otherwise could only be accessed by more privileged groups in the school.
3. Facilitate school trips, in collaboration with local Indigenous groups that enable students to attend Indigenous pow-wows, ceremonies, feasts among other activities such as learning about traditional medicines.

Example initiative: [School Profile - Rutland Middle and Secondary School](#)

4. Engage with local Indigenous Friendship Centres for land-based education opportunities with local leaders.
5. Connect with your local public health network to provide tailored resources and supports for your students and include public health professionals in school wellness events, contests, assemblies etc. to build community and connections between students and public health professionals.