

CODA, CCSA & Others Tackle Drug Prevention Nationally

The Council on Drug Abuse is excited to be working with substance abuse associations and experts from across Canada as we tackle creating a national plan that tackles alcohol, tobacco and other drug use/abuse/misuse.

Recently, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) initiated a five-year plan for mobilizing youth-focused media and service organizations to reduce drug use among Canada's youth. The goal of *A Drug Prevention Strategy for Canada's Youth* is to reduce the number of young people 10–24 years old who use illicit drugs, delay the onset of use, reduce the frequency of use, and curb the use of multiple illicit drugs. The youth strategy uses three complementary approaches, each intended to reinforce the impact of the others while delivering its own specific results:

- **National Standards**—A set of evidence-based Canadian national standards for the design and delivery of prevention programs will be developed, including a compendium of existing resources that meet these standards and a means for communities, schools, families and others to access them.
- **Media/Youth Consortium**—A media/youth consortium will unite national media corporations, organizations that market to youth, and youth service organizations in order to extend and reinforce consistent prevention messages.
- **Sustainable Partnerships**—The creation and maintenance of sustainable partnerships involves existing and new CCSA networks, linking organizations that represent various sectors committed to implementing and sustaining the strategy.

National Standards

Activities to date have included the completion of a knowledge summary of prevention standards and guidelines that surveys national and international standards for youth prevention. This comprehensive summary of areas of success in prevention programming will inform the activities of a National Standards Task Force and assist in developing minimum national standards.

An implementation strategy to support the uptake of the National Standards will also be developed consisting of a knowledge exchange component and a community capacity component. The knowledge exchange component will connect the National Standards with those who develop, select and deliver prevention programs. The community capacity component will seek to address the needs and gaps across program development, selection and implementation. To inform this work, a survey of key stakeholders will be conducted to gather input on the best modes and methods of implementing national standards, and to further identify existing needs and gaps in prevention of youth substance abuse.

For more information on the development of National Standards and/or to share information about your prevention program, please contact Heather Clark, Research and Policy Analyst, at hclark@ccsa.ca or (613) 235-4048 ext. 224.

Media/Youth Consortium

In order to ensure the development and delivery of consistent prevention messages that will resonate with youth and gain their support and interest, testing of various "strategic territories", each with a unique communications approach, was undertaken with 500 young people between the ages of 10 and 24. This research focused on ensuring that the manner in which messages will be communicated to youth on the topic of illicit substances will not only be believable, but will effectively influence or support a desirable attitude or belief.

This research will inform the development of a common communications platform, from which all prevention messages and creative materials will stem, while still allowing for customization to ensure prevention messages reach specific segments of the target population "where they are at".

Next steps include the creative expression of this platform or brand, the establishment of a national advisory group of subject-matter experts, and the creation of a "donors' table" to allow for upstream investment by foundations, partners and others to make the Consortium operational.

To learn more about the Media/Youth Consortium and how you can get involved, contact Karine Plouffe, National Priority Advisor at kplouffe@ccsa.ca or (613) 235-4048 ext. 249.

Sustainable Partnerships

This component of the strategy is the underpinning of all activities in the strategy. By leveraging CCSA's knowledge, experience and expertise, partnerships will be developed, enhanced and maximized through a deliberate series of interacting processes and entities.

CCSA continues to consult with key partners and stakeholders, exploring opportunities for collaboration and partnership in all aspects of this strategy. On March 26 and 27 in Ottawa, a national workshop of 35 key prevention experts and representatives was held with the primary goal of identifying key priorities for action for youth between the ages of 10 and 24 in Canada. The output document from this meeting will be shared with a larger network of stakeholders with an invitation to add input to the discussions.

In addition, CCSA is working toward the formation of new partnerships. Over 1,000 copies of the booklet *A Drug Prevention Strategy for Canada's Youth* were mailed to stakeholders across Canada, inviting them to become a part of the Strategy. CCSA has received many expressions of interest and will work to develop a structure that ensures the appropriate inclusion of groups that are currently engaged in local prevention efforts.

For more information on upcoming consultations and how you can get involved, please contact Karen Cumberland, National Priority Advisory, at kcumberland@ccsa.ca or (613) 235-4048 ext. 234.

For a more detailed description of *A Drug Prevention Strategy for Canada's Youth*, please go to CCSA's website at www.ccsa.ca

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) is Canada's national addictions agency. Established by an Act of Parliament in 1988, the Centre provides objective, evidence-based information and advice aimed at reducing the health, social and economic harm associated with substance abuse and addictions. CCSA has a 20-year history of accomplishments that have advanced knowledge and understanding in the substance abuse field and have positioned the Centre as a leading partner in major national initiatives.