



Supporting Children & Youth with Substance Use Concerns in Primary Care

PANELISTS

Angie Hamilton • Dr. Jennifer Wyman

WITH

Dr. Carrie Bernard • Dr. Stephanie Zhou

Ontario College of
Family Physicians  Thriving Family Physicians
in a Healthy Ontario

 Family & Community Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Mental Health
and Addictions

September 23rd, 2026

Practising Well: Your Community of Practice

Please introduce yourself in the chat!

Your name,
Your community,
Your X (Twitter)
handle

Interested in becoming a
speaker at our CoPs?
Send us an email with your
name & topic(s) of interest to
practisingwell@ocfp.on.ca

@OntarioCollege
#PractisingWell

Your Panelists: Disclosures

Angie Hamilton

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Health Canada CCSA
- Toronto Public Health- Our Health, Our City advisory board
- SSRK/CIHR- co-PI
- Families for Addiction Recovery- board member, executive director, peer supporter
- Ontario Family Caregivers' Advisory Network- past board member

Dr. Jennifer Wyman

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- META:PHI- clinical programs lead
- Women's College Hospital AFP Innovation Fund- principal investigator/co-investigator
- Women's College Hospital Foundation CIHR-collaborator/knowledge user
- OCFP Practicing Well Speakers Honorarium

Disclosures

Dr. Carrie Bernard

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Ontario College of Family Physicians
- University of Toronto – Stipend for role in the Division of Mental Health and Addictions
- Ontario College of Family Physicians – Practising Well Scientific Planning Committee
- FPME – Medical Editor
- Membership on Advisory boards or speakers' bureaus:
- College of Family Physicians of Canada – Past President of the Board of Directors

Dr. Stephanie Zhou @stephanieyzhou

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Ontario College of Family Physicians – Practising Well Scientific Planning Committee
- Ontario Medical Association – Honoraria for practice management lectures
- Department of Family and Community Medicine (University of Toronto), Dept of Medical Imaging, Dept of Ob/Gyn for practice management lectures
- Toronto Public Health – Board of Directors Member
- McMaster University, Queen's University, McGill University, Toronto Metropolitan University, OntarioMD & Dr. Bill, Canadian Society of Allergy & Immunology, Canadian Fertility & Andrology Society, and Women in Academic Medicine - Honoraria for teaching financial literacy, billing, and practice management.

Mitigating Bias

Disclosure of financial support



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Potential conflicts



N/A

Mitigating potential bias



The Scientific Planning Committee (SPC) has control over the choice of topics and speakers.

Content has been developed according to the standards and expectations of the Mainpro+ certification program.

The program content was reviewed by the SPC.

A Growing Library of Practical Learning



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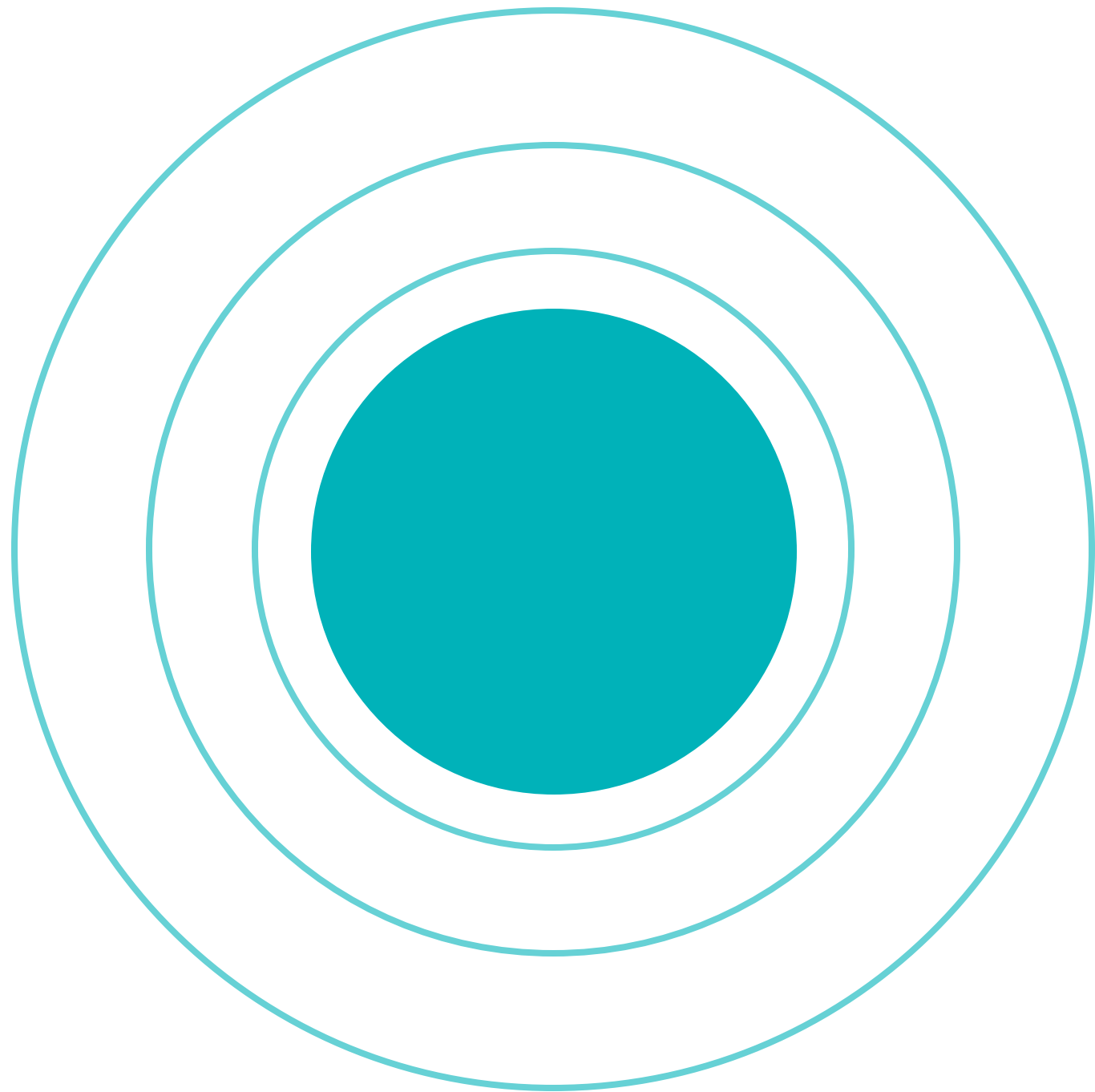
Earn **1-credit-per-hour** for reviewing the recording and resources from **past CoP sessions**. The self-learning program is certified for up to 63 Mainpro+ credits.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the lands on which we are hosting this meeting include the traditional territories of many nations.

The OCFP and DFCM recognizes that the many injustices experienced by the Indigenous Peoples of what we now call Canada continue to affect their health and well-being. The OCFP and DFCM respects that Indigenous people have rich cultural and traditional practices that have been known to improve health outcomes.

I invite all of us to reflect on the territories you are calling in from as we commit ourselves to gaining knowledge; forging a new, culturally safe relationship; and contributing to reconciliation.



Your Panelists



Angie Hamilton

Dr. Jennifer Wyman

**Supporting Children & Youth with Substance Use Concerns in
Primary Care**

Supporting Children and Youth with Substance Use Concerns in Primary Care

Ontario College of Family Physicians: Practicing Well CoP

Sept. 23, 2026

Angie Hamilton

Executive Director, Families for Addiction Recovery (FAR)

Families for Addiction Recovery (FAR)

1. Support Family Caregivers using the Invitation to Change Approach
 - *Beyond Addiction; How Science and Kindness Help People Change*
 - 3 free virtual services; one-on-one (P2P), group, live phone line
 - compassionate approach for encouraging behaviour change
 - draws on the evidence-based principles and practices of:
 - CRAFT
 - MI
 - ACT
- 2. Educate/Advocate
- 3. Research

FAR Research

1. Perspectives of youth, caregivers and service providers on the effect of cannabis on youth mental health (SSHRC)
2. Perspectives of family caregivers to those with substance use disorder (SUD) on laws, policies and practices in the treatment of SUD (CIHR)

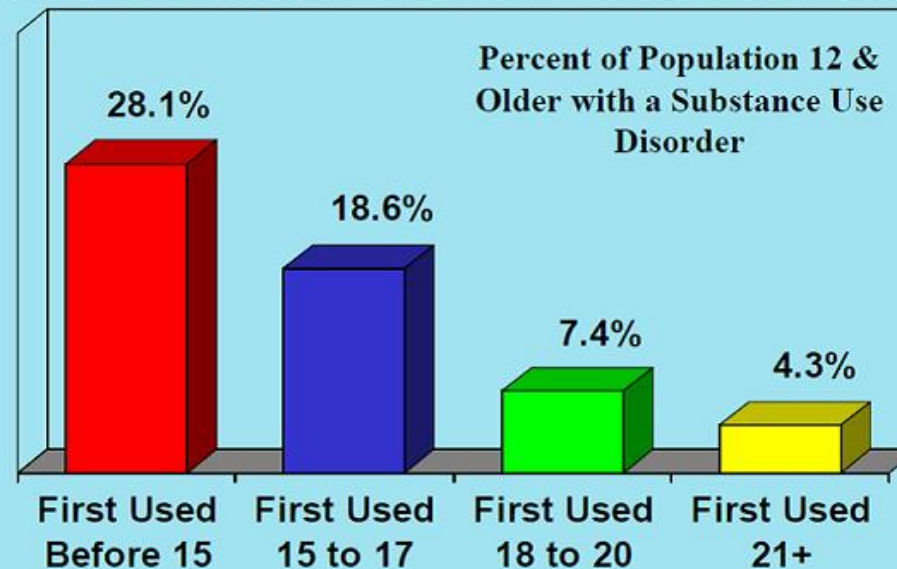
SUD is a Pediatric Onset Illness



**Adolescent Substance Abuse:
America's #1 Public Health Problem**



**The Earlier Teens Use Any Substance,
the Greater the Risk of Addiction**

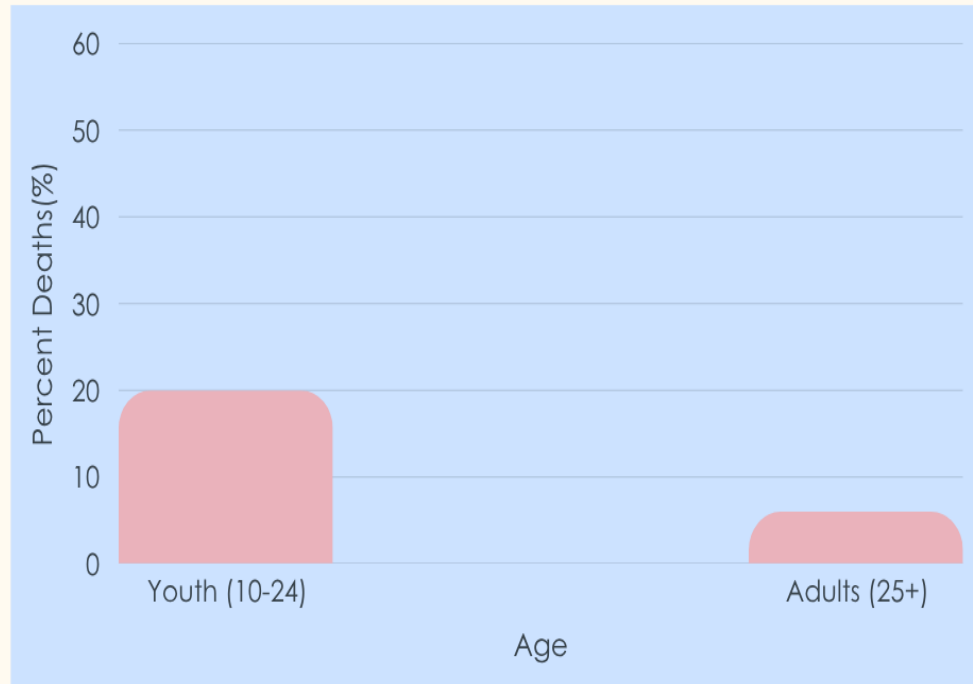


Source: CASA analysis of the *National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health* (NSDUH), 2009.

Copyright © 2011 by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. All rights reserved.
May not be used or reproduced without the express written permission of The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

Most youth deaths are from preventable causes

Deaths Attributable to Alcohol and Other Drugs by Age Group



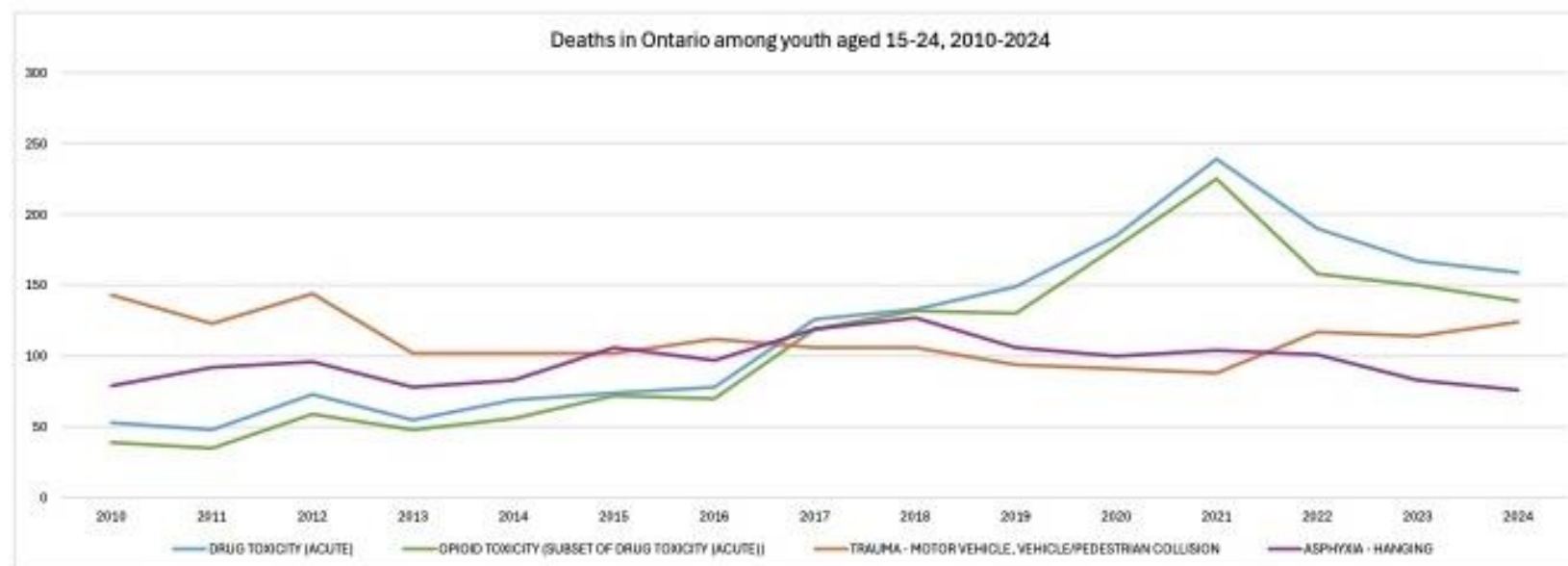
- The percentage of youth deaths involving substances was greater than adult substance-involved deaths (20% vs. 6%)
- These findings support continued screening and early intervention for substance use and mental health conditions among adolescents.

Allen, C. B., Dennis, M., Mouton, C., & Grella, C. E. (2026). [A comparative analysis of the most common causes of mortality and substance use by age](#). *Public Health*, 257. doi: 10.1016/j.puhe.2026.106306.

Note. Alcohol or drugs were involved in 1 in 5 youth deaths in 2022, compared to fewer than 1 in 10 adult deaths, even though adults had a higher overall number of substance-involved deaths.



Causes of Death of Youth/Young Adults in Ontario



Cause of Death	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DRUG TOXICITY (ACUTE)	53	48	73	55	69	74	78	126	133	149	185	239	190	167	159
OPIOID TOXICITY (SUBSET OF DRUG TOXICITY (ACUTE))	39	35	59	48	56	72	70	119	132	130	177	225	158	150	139
TRAUMA - MOTOR VEHICLE, VEHICLE/PEDESTRIAN COLLISION	143	123	144	102	102	102	112	106	106	94	91	88	117	114	124
ASPHYXIA - HANGING	79	92	96	78	83	106	97	119	127	106	100	104	101	83	76

Source: Office of the Chief Coroner

Date Effective: December 17 2025

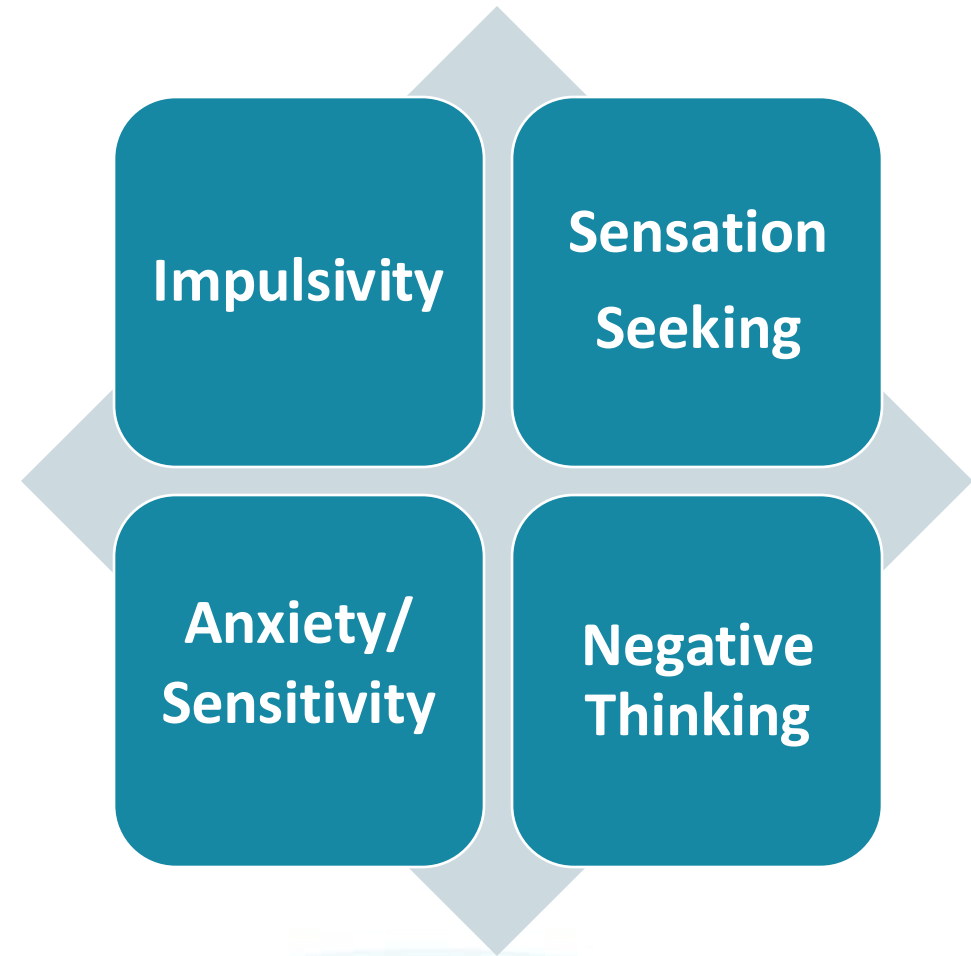
Based on death factor.

Risk Factors

- Genetics (40-60% of risk)
- Trauma/Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Other Mental Health Conditions
- Neurodivergence
- Personality Traits (PreVenture)

PreVenture

PreVenture incorporates motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to help youth better understand and manage the aspects of their personalities associated with risky behaviors and substance use. The program discusses four personality styles.



People who are particularly impulsive or struggle with ADHD symptoms are not good at anticipating the future and seldom think through consequences before they experience them. As a result, for these people, punishment as the only consequence can lead to a profound sense of learned helplessness, defeat, and generally feeling bad about themselves.

**— *Beyond Addiction, How Science and Kindness Help People Change*
by Jeffrey Foote, Carrie Wilkens, and Nicole Kosanke**

Harm Reduction

- Delay Use
- Screen for SUD and Concurrent Mental Health Conditions
- Early Intervention
- No withdrawal management services < 16
- What if they refuse treatment?
- No SCS < 18
- Housing: Children's Aid Society or Youth Shelters
- [Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#)
- [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#)
- Safer ways to use drugs can be found on the [CATIE website](#)

Impact of SUD on Families

- SUD shatters families
- all familial relationships affected
- verbal/physical abuse/neglect
- involvement of CAS/Corrections
- Sophie's Choice
- PTSD
- Anxiety/Depression
- Isolation
- Financial/Employment

Impact of SUD on Families

“We have struggled to maintain the sanctity of our home life...
We have lost thousands of dollars to theft...
...the physical destruction of our home...
Finally, our very marriage is in jeopardy...”

[Mills, L. et al, “Stumbling Along, Walking on Eggshells and Vicious Circles: What Happens while Families wait for Youth Substance Use Treatment”, CJFY, Vol. 11 No. 1 \(2019\)](#)

What Family Caregivers Provide

- Informal case managers
- Crisis intervention
- System navigation
- Advocacy
- Monitor treatment plans to lessen risk of relapse
- Housing, assist daily living/paying bills
- Maintain records of treatments/medications/hospitalizations
- Provide information on the context of a loved one's life

[Caring Together: Families as Partners in the Mental Health and Addiction System](#)

(CMHA, ON 2006)

Standards Council of Canada MHSUH Roadmap

Issue 23 - Valuing the Role of Families/Caregivers in Supporting People with Complex Needs, and Acknowledging their Own Needs for Services/Supports

“It is important to recognize the emotional, mental, and financial toll of their role and **include them as key partners** in mental health and substance use healthcare.”

Recommendation

“To conclude, the establishment of comprehensive national standards that **prioritize the role of families and caregivers** in supporting individuals with complex needs is a vital step towards more inclusive, person-centred, and effective MHSUH care. By addressing the **challenges related to legislative variations**, recognizing the evolving needs of caregivers, providing targeted **training for healthcare professionals**, and promoting cultural competency, these standards can significantly enhance the quality of care delivered across the country.”

What Family Caregivers Need

Family Caregiver Guidelines (MHCC, 2013)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to know that the person they care for is receiving adequate care and services, and is able to achieve a reasonable quality of life. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to receive information, skills, support and services from knowledgeable mental health service providers to enable them to effectively provide care to the person living with mental illness. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to have their relationships and caregiving role recognized by mental health service providers and to be meaningfully involved in assessment and treatment planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to receive support and services for the family and its individual members to sustain their health and emotional well-being. |

Tips to Facilitate Family Engagement

- Ask how family is currently involved
- Ask for consent to involve/advise
- If no; ask again later
- Advocate for involvement
 - improves outcomes; remind of ways families assist (Are we in the waiting room? Do they live at home?)
- Explain privacy isn't all or nothing
- Assessment and Discharge Planning

[Caregivers as Partners: Mental Health and Addiction](#)
[\(three 20-minute modules from The Ontario Caregivers Organization\)](#)



THANK YOU!

Angie Hamilton

Executive Director, Families for Addiction Recovery (FAR)

angie@farcanda.org

Your Panelists



Angie Hamilton

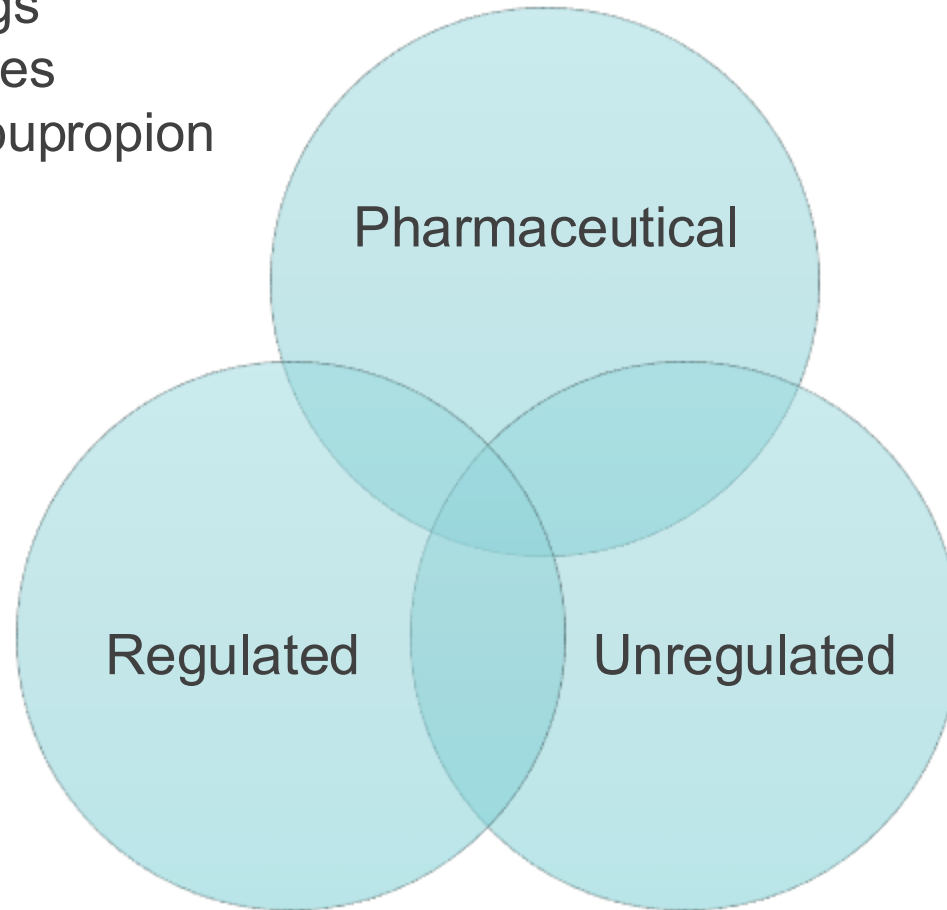
Dr. Jennifer Wyman

**Supporting Children & Youth with Substance Use Concerns in
Primary Care**



Opioids – codeine, oxycodone, morphine, hydromorphone
Benzodiazepines, “z” drugs
Stimulants – Amphetamines
Gabapentin, pregabalin, bupropion

Alcohol
Tobacco/nicotine
Cannabis



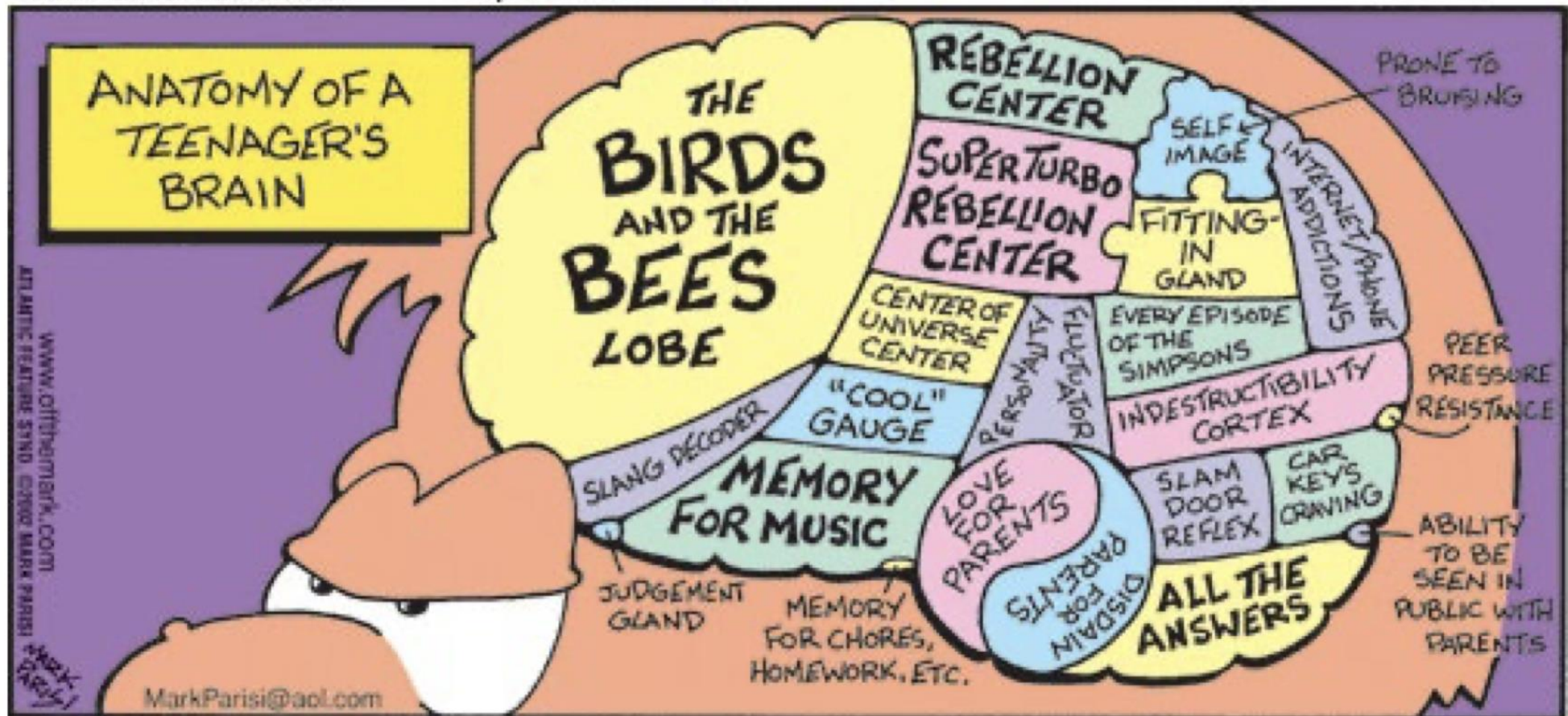
Opioids- fentanyl
BZDs – “xannies”
Cocaine
Methamphetamines
Cannabis
MDMA, GHB, kratom, phenibut,
Ketamine, mushrooms, LSD

The Adolescent Brain

off the mark

by Mark Parisi

www.offthemark.com



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Worried Parents



What are the challenges for family doctors?

Balancing:

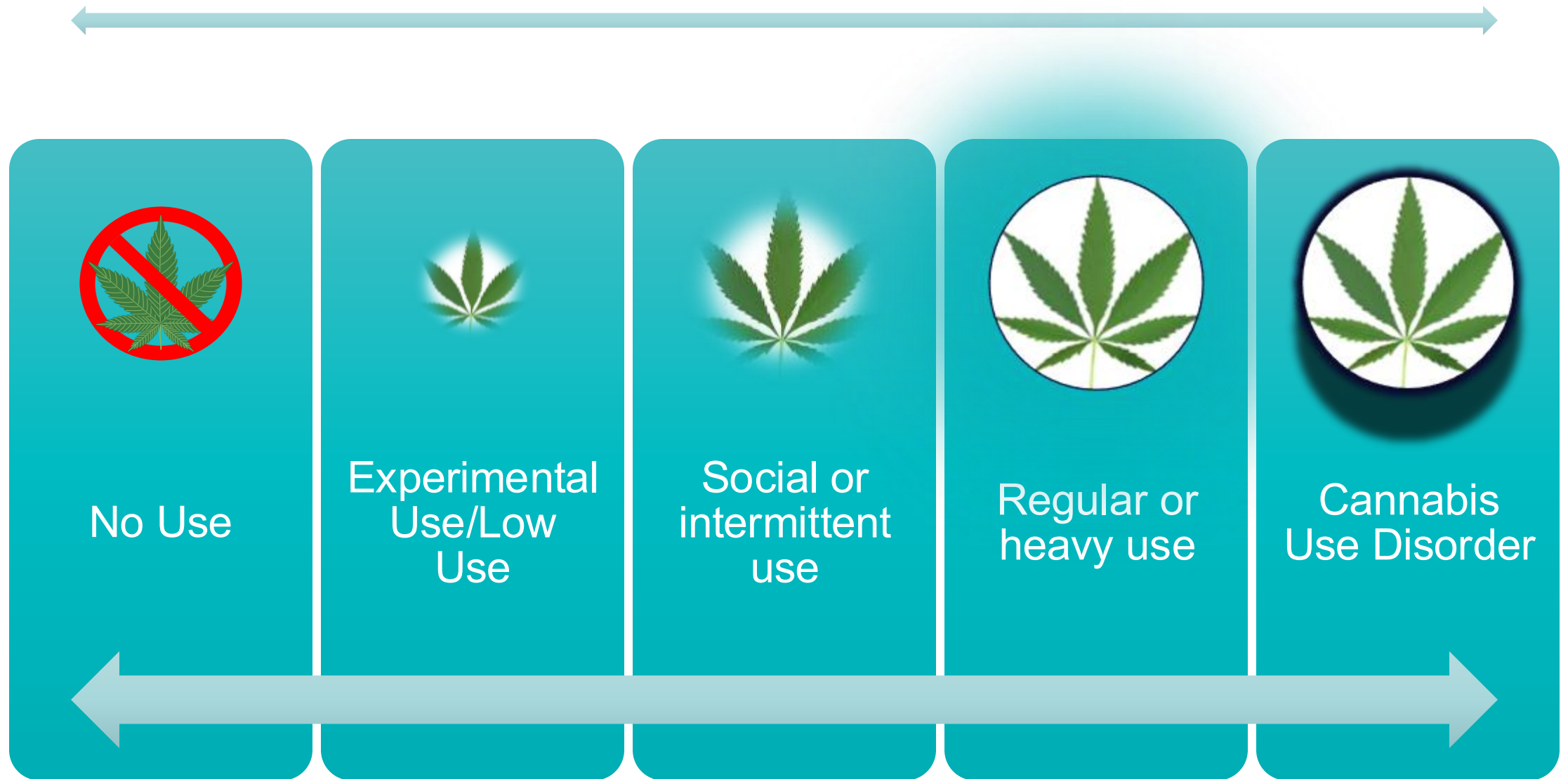
- Confidentiality and trust with our adolescent patients
- Parent concerns
- Developmental stage of the youth
- Not all substance use is harmful AND prevent harms from higher risk use
- Risk factors for development of SUDs
- Underlying mental health concerns

1 of every 6 youth who start using cannabis will develop problematic use

BUT

A majority of youth do not develop substance use disorders

Spectrum of Cannabis Use



The 8 As for addressing cannabis use with adolescents

- **A**ssure patient privacy and confidentiality
- **A**sk about cannabis use, after obtaining permission to do so
- **A**nswer all patient questions, and support health questions
- **A**ssess the impacts of cannabis use
- **A**ppraise patient willingness to change or reduce cannabis use
- **A**ssist with specific goal setting and a realistic time frame
- **A**rrange for a follow-up visit within weeks, and regularly thereafter
- **A**cknowledge parental needs and concerns

Counselling adolescents and parents about cannabis: a primer for health professionals.

Richard E Belanger, Chrisina N Grant. Canada Pediatric Society Cannabis Project Advisory Group , 2020.

Assure privacy and confidentiality

- Advise patients and parents that you routinely meet with children alone for at least part of their appointment (e.g. around age 12)
 - Patient confidentiality and privacy is important for youth to feel comfortable being honest about their own concerns or behaviours
 - The patient's right to privacy in their medical care and health records is protected by federal legislation and no age is specified
 - However – encourage open communication and sharing of health information to best support the youth
-
- Capacity and consent

Ask about substance use after obtaining permission

Screening:

- *“To get a sense of your overall health, I will be asking questions about different areas of your life, including school, friends, and substance use. Is that ok with you?”*

In conjunction with specific symptoms (fatigue, low mood, sleep problems, school issues):

- *“Before asking more questions aboutI may also need to ask about substance use. Is that ok with you?”*
- *“So I know that around your age some kids are starting to drink or use weed. What about you? Have you tried...”*
- *What are you seeing in your peers?*

Answer all questions and support healthy choices

For the patient who has not used cannabis:

- *“This is a wise decision because cannabis affects how the brain develops, and we know that your brain will continue developing until you are about 25 years old.*

Depending on past medical history:

- *“I also know that you’ve struggled with depression/ anxiety in the past. We know from studies that using cannabis can actually make it more likely that you’ll become depressed/ anxious again.”*

Offer information about preventing negative impacts of cannabis on health:

- Some individuals should avoid cannabis use completely, including those who are very young; have a medical condition (specifically heart, lung, and mental health conditions and treatments); have a family or past history of psychosis and depression; or are pregnant)

Assess the impacts of cannabis use

“Can I ask you some questions about the possible impact that cannabis use may have on you and your family?”

- Problematic use :
 - Daily or almost daily
 - Mood-levelling effects (relaxation and relief of anxiety)
 - Find it difficult to stop because of anxiety
 - Repeated unsuccessful attempts to stop or reduce use
 - Impairment in psychosocial functioning
 - Expression of concern from family/friends

CUDIT-R, CRAFFT

Appraise patient willingness to change or reduce use

- *Some youth I meet have thought about cutting down on their cannabis use, because while they like the feeling they get from it, they don't like [...]. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever thought you might like to cut back?"*
- Ok to express specific concerns and offer options for further support
- Urgency and referral:
 - younger adolescents
 - safety risks
 - significant impact on social, academic or family life
 - concurrent mental health conditions/neurodiversity
 - substances other than alcohol or cannabis

Assist with specific goal setting

Goal setting: specific, achievable

- Examples:
 - Cannabis - only on weekends, joints and not concentrates, not with alcohol
 - Alcohol – x# of drinks, spacing out, with food
- Safety:
 - Always having a “wingman”
 - Avoid combining cannabis with alcohol and other substances
 - Don’t drive after using or get in the car with a driver who has used
 - Make sure you are in a safe environment if you plan to use: consider who you are with, hazards around you
 - Try to avoid daily or near daily use

Acknowledge parental concerns

Ideally before talking to parents about their concerns, you should explicitly seek (and obtain) your patient's consent:

“Your parents are concerned that you may be using cannabis. Do you mind if we talk about this?”

- *“What have you observed that makes you think your child is using cannabis?”*
- *If you think they are using, how does this affect their behaviour at home, at school, or with friends?*
- *Are you ok with me sharing your concerns so that we can discuss together?”*

Risk Factors for Developing SUDs

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Family history of substance use disorder
- Parental substance use/favourable attitudes regarding the behaviour
- Early substance use: age at first intoxication, frequency of cannabis use during adolescence
- Concurrent conditions:
 - ADHD + neurodiversity
 - Conduct disorder/oppositional defiant disorder
 - Mood disorder
 - Social anxiety disorder

ADHD and Substance Use

- Impulsivity
- ? Common dopamine thread
- ? Interaction of ADHD symptoms with poor academic performance
- Treatment of ADHD appears to reduce risk of developing SUDs, not increase

Mariani, 2007. JJ, Levin FR. Treatment strategies for co-occurring ADHD and substance use disorders. Am J Addict. 2007;16 Suppl 1(Suppl 1):45-54; quiz 55-6.
doi: 10.1080/10550490601082783. PMID: 17453606; PMCID: PMC2676785. hostimulant treatment in adolescence reduces the risk of developing SUDs

Welcome to

Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario

Across Ontario, there are 32 YWHO Hub Networks that provide high-quality integrated youth services to support the well-being of young people aged 12 to 25, including mental health and substance use supports, primary health care, community and social supports, and more.

[Learn more about YWHO](#)





**Mental Health & Substance Use
Services for Black Youth**

Mental Health and Wellness for Us, by Us.

Are you or is someone you know
experiencing mental health or substance
use challenges?

If you identify as Black and are between
12–29 years old, we're here to *help you*,

RAAM (Rapid Access Addiction Medicine) Clinics

Clinic Locations

About RAAM Clinics

A rapid access addiction medicine (RAAM) clinic provides care for people with concerns related to substance use. Most RAAM clinics provide care without requiring an appointment or referral, offering information, medication, counselling, harm reduction education, and connections to other services based on each client's individual needs and goals. Each clinic determines its own hours of operation and staffing, and care may be provided in person or virtually. There are nearly 100 publicly funded RAAM clinics across Ontario.

Enter your postal code or city/town to find a RAAM clinic near you.

Postal code or City/Town

Ottawa, ON, Canada

Oasis RAAM program

2 kms away

221 Nelson St, Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 1C7, Canada

(613) 569-3488 ext. 2106

[Details >](#)

[Website >](#)

Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre RAAM

4 kms away

1145 Carling Ave rm 2141, Ottawa,
ON, Canada

613-722-6521 ext. 6508

[Details >](#)

[Website >](#)

Street Health Centre, Kingston Community Health Centre

146 kms away

115 Barrack St, Kingston, ON,
Canada

613-549-1440

[Details >](#)

[Website >](#)

Bancroft/North Hastings RAAM Clinic (CMHA HPE)

174 kms away

15 Oak Street, Bancroft, ON,
Canada

613-403-1733

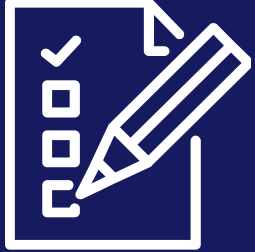
[Details >](#)

[Website >](#)

Questions?



Resources Tools



Links to resources shared today will be sent to participants following the session.

Tools and Resources

Resource Type	
Guidelines	https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/lrcug_professional-pdf
Patient Resources	https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/preteens-and-teens/marijuana-what-parents-need-to-know
Practice Resources	https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/counselling-adolescents-parents-about-cannabis-primer-for-health-professionals https://www.ccsa.ca/en/talking-pot-youth-cannabis-communication-guide-youth-allies META:PHI Primary Care Management of Substance Use
Video	https://www.metaphi.ca/wp-content/uploads/Webinar_Working-with-Adolescents-with-ODU_Mar2026.pdf

Where to find help

- [ASCO - Black Mental Health and Addictions](#)
- [Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario](#)
- [Amani Mental Health and Wellness Services for Black Youth](#)
- [RAAM Clinics- Provincial Directory](#)
- [CAMH Youth Concurrent and Addiction Disorders](#)
- [Sick Kids Care Consult for Youth Substance Use](#)
- [Breakaway Services](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Connex Ontario](#)
- [ontario.ca mental health services for youth](#)

Resources

- Residential Treatment:
 - [Pine River Institute](#) (Shelburne)
 - [Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre](#) (Ottawa)
 - [Caritas](#) (Woodbridge)
 - [Preventure](#)
 - [Caregivers as Partners: Mental Health and Addiction \(three 20-minute modules from The Ontario Caregivers Organization\)](#)
 - [Standards Council of Canada MHSUH Standardization Roadmap \(2024\)](#)
 - [Caring Together: Families as Partners in the Mental Health and Addiction System](#) (CMHA ON, 2006)
 - [Families for Addiction Recovery \(FAR\)](#)
 - Beyond Addiction: How Science and Kindness Help People Change by Jeffrey Foote, Carrie Wilkens, and Nicole Kosanke
- 

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

OCFP 2026 Member Survey

Enter for a chance to win a \$100 gift card.



Upcoming Community of Practice Events



**Children's Aid Society Reporting: Navigating
Complex Decisions in Family Practice**

**October 28th, 2026
8:00am – 9:00am**



[Register Now](#)



**Practical Assessment & Management of TMJ Pain
in Family Medicine**

**November 25th, 2026
8:00am – 9:00am**



[Register Now](#)



Scan QR Code

The Children's Mental Health Workshop Series

Foundations of Children's Mental Health

October 7, 2026 | 1:30PM - 4:30PM | Virtual Workshop | Earn up to **3 credits!**



- Explore how to take a comprehensive psychosocial history specific to school-aged children and adolescents
- Identify common childhood presentations, including adjustment disorder, anxiety & depression, and review essential concepts related to ADHD
- Review early identification through use of evidence-based screening tools
- And More

Price: \$250 + HST

[Register now](#)



REGISTER TODAY!



Health Equity Community of Practice for Family Physicians

October 8, 2026 | 12 P.M. - 1 P.M. EST

Root Causes of Indigenous Health Inequities



[Click here](#) or scan the QR code

Osteoporosis and Fracture Prevention Workshop

Participants will:

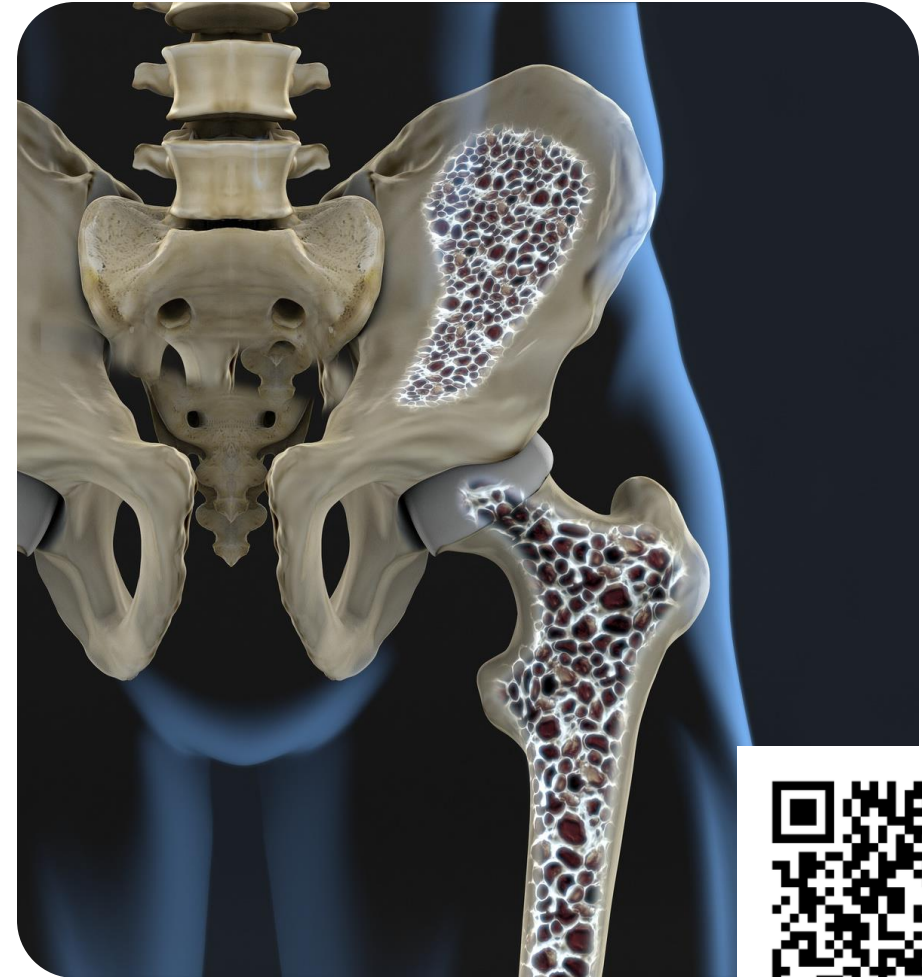
- ✓ Strengthen their approach to osteoporosis screening, risk assessment and treatment planning.
- ✓ Discover practical tools, resources and strategies that can be applied immediately in practice.
- ✓ Learn from expert faculty through interactive discussion, case studies and Q&A.

October 14 , 2026 | 12:00pm – 3:00pm

\$195 + HST | Virtual

Earn up to 6 Mainpro+ credits!

[Register Now](#)



Scan for more info



Peer Connect

For Family Physicians and Family Medicine Residents

Connect with a family physician colleague to receive **tailored support on challenges you are facing in your practice.**



What Peer Learners are saying about their experience....

“After a medical leave from my practice, having a colleague to support me during the transition back has been **invaluable**”.

“[Peer Connect] absolutely has helped [with] **building up my confidence and skill set**”.

“[My peer guide] has given me a lot of **insight into my own clinical practice** as well as my non-clinical goals. I would highly recommend the Peer Connect program to others”.



Learn at your own pace while earning Mainpro+ Credits!

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to learn more and sign up >>

