

McCreary News: Spring 2007

QUESTION:

Strong connections to school reduce the odds of youth engaging in which of the following behaviours: Marijuana use, pregnancy, suicide attempts, or involvement in physical fights. (Answer at bottom)

This newsletter gives an update on new reports available from the McCreary Centre Society, current projects underway at McCreary, and new readings in the field of youth health. It is sent to individuals who have asked to be included on McCreary's mailing list.

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1. Study of BC's street-involved and marginalized youth yields surprises

A new McCreary report just published shows that the lives of marginalized and street-involved youth are complex and filled with challenges, dangers and opportunities. Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in BC summarizes the results of surveys with marginalized youth in the North, Interior, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island and Vancouver. It also serves as a follow-up to McCreary's 2000 health survey of marginalized and street-involved youth (street youth) in six communities across BC. It looks at many of the same issues, considers

emerging trends and health challenges and, by comparing the results with those of the 2000 survey, reflects on what progress has been made over the past six years.

Read full press release at www.mcs.bc.ca/april13-07.htm

Download the report at www.mcs.bc.ca/rs_new.htm

2. New Reports & Resources

Against the Odds: A profile of Street-involved and marginalized youth in BC (2007)

This report summarizes the results of surveys with marginalized and street-involved youth in the North, Interior, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island and Vancouver.

For more information or to download the report, visit www.mcs.bc.ca/rs_new.htm

Voices from the Inside: Next Steps with Youth in Custody (2007)

The Next Steps is an interactive workshop series that gives youth the opportunity to respond to the results of McCreary's youth health research. It was adapted to give youth in custody the opportunity to respond to the results of the McCreary Centre Society's 2004 survey of BC youth in custody. This report chronicles youth's feedback from the workshops, their recommendations for change and the response of the custody centres.

For more information or to download the report, visit www.mcs.bc.ca/rs_new.htm

New Fact Sheets on Youth Health in BC (2007)

New research from the latest AHS is now available for downloading. Topics include: sexual behaviour; connections to school; safety and violence; harassment and discrimination; emotional health; and injuries. McCreary encourages the use and duplication of these Fact Sheets.

For more information or to download Fact Sheets, visit www.mcs.bc.ca/rs_facts.htm

3. Growing Up, Taking Risks

(An article on risk-taking among adolescence, excerpted from HealthLink, Canadian-Health-Network.ca bi-weekly newsletter)

When adults see teenagers smoking at the local mall or drinking alcohol behind the arena, our first reaction is often shock and concern. Most adults view adolescence as a time of flirting with danger and taking risks, a time when teens get into trouble and it's up to us to keep them safe.

Activities like smoking, drinking, challenging authority, or experimenting with sex are seen as problem behaviours that we need to fix. This perspective, however, can actually prevent us from understanding why teens participate in these activities and what they get out of them. Our challenge is to accept that some risk taking is a normal part of being a teenager to find effective ways to reach out to teens and to provide the supports to help them stay healthy and safe.

[Read full article](#)

4. MYF Conference: Re-Thinking Risk in Adolescence, April 27-28, 2007

McCreary Youth Foundation's annual conference will explore the theme of "Rethinking Risk" and will challenge conference participants on concepts of risk and to consider both the positive and negative aspects of the risky and risk-taking behaviours of adolescents.

A growing body of research and academic work argues in favour of rethinking our ideas about the importance of measuring at-risk, risky, and risk-taking behaviours of adolescents. It is becoming apparent that documenting risk behaviours does not necessarily change it and that resilience and capacity building in young people; enhancement of protective factors within individuals; and the introduction and evaluation of harm reduction models might be more beneficial.

The goal of this year's conference is to focus our attention on the nature of risk and to understand risk from a young person's perspective. We can then start to address some of the challenges and ways in which we can work to minimize some of the negative impacts of risk and to ensure that the required supports and protective factors are there for young people.

The program is intended for a multidisciplinary audience of academics, youth serving professionals and young people.

Confirmed speakers include:

- Opening remarks by Bob Lenarduzzi
- Keynote address by David A. Wolfe, Ph.D., RBC Chair in Children's Mental Health, Director, CAMH Centre for Prevention Science, Professor of Psychology & Psychiatry, University of Toronto
- Closing remarks by Ian Manion, Ph.D., C.Psych., Executive Director, Operations, The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO

Registration is limited to 174 persons. Fees are: \$200 after March 15.

For a full conference description, visit: www.myfoundation.ca/conference-description.html or contact Sarah Day or Kathy Powelson at 604-299-1609 or email: info@myfoundation.ca

5. Enacted Stigma and Youth

Have you ever wondered what young people think could make their schools and communities a safer place for LGBTQ youth? Over the coming months, McCreary will host a series of focus groups to answer this question. It's called the Enacted Stigma Project. What is enacted stigma? Enacted Stigma is how others demonstrate their disapproval of behaviour they don't consider to be within cultural norms, often by rejection, exclusion, discrimination, harassment and violence. Current research from McCreary has found that enacted stigma can cause health problems for youth, and the goal of these focus group workshops is to identify what the participants think other young people, schools and communities can do to make a difference and institute positive change for LGBTQ youth.

For more information, check out McCreary's new Fact Sheets on stigma:

[Stigma and sexual orientation for Aboriginal youth](#)

[Stigma and sexual orientation for Asian youth](#)

[Stigma and sexual orientation for European-heritage youth](#)

6. Other Readings in Youth Health

1) Ungar, Michael, "Too Safe For Their Own Good: How Risk and Responsibility Help Teens Thrive," McClelland & Stewart, 2007.

From the publisher's website:

Internationally respected social worker and family therapist Michael Ungar argues that our desire to keep our children safe is causing us to do the opposite: put them in harm's way. By continuing to protect them from failure and disappointment, many of our kids are missing out on the "risk-taker's advantage," the benefits that come from experiencing manageable amounts of danger. In *Too Safe for Their Own Good*, Ungar encourages parents to recall their own childhoods and the lessons they learned from being risk-takers and responsibility-seekers, much to the annoyance of their own parents. He offers support to parents in setting appropriate limits and provides concrete suggestions for allowing children the opportunity to experience the rites of passage that will help them become competent, happy, thriving adults.

2) Bell-Gadsby, C, Clark, N, and Hunt, S. "It's a Girl Thang!: A manual for creating girls groups." McCreary Youth Foundation, 2006.

[Download manual at McCreary Youth Foundation website:
<http://www.myfoundation.ca/academic.html>]

Girls groups nurture and reinforce femaleness as a positive identity with inherent strengths to support healthy self-expression. They also provide decision-making models and life skills to aid in transition to womanhood. The girls group framework presented in this manual is intended to provide marginalized and at-risk female youth, ages 12-19, with a space to explore a wide range of issues that impact their daily lives. The framework utilizes a relational/cultural model that can be applied to girls in a variety of contexts, including rural girls, aboriginal girls, and girls dealing with issues of marginalization including poverty, homelessness, exploitation and the intersections of oppression.

ANSWER: The odds of being involved in all these behaviours decreases when youth have strong connections to school. For more information on the impact school can have on youth health, check out School Connectedness Among BC Youth from the McCreary website at <http://www.mcs.bc.ca/>.