

# SUBSTANCE USE & CRITICAL INJURIES

## AMONG BC YOUTH WITH GOVERNMENT CARE EXPERIENCE



Young people in and from government care in BC shared their suggestions to reduce substance-related harms among young people in the province. Their suggestions helped to inform recommendations made by the BC Office of the Representative for Children and Youth.

### SUGGESTIONS FROM YOUTH TO SUPPORT SAFER SUBSTANCE USE:

#### Safe & affordable housing

*"All the rental apartments are full. If you are living on the street you're more likely to be around people that are using. We need to fix that and get people housing."*

#### Opportunities to succeed

*"Having a promise of a future is what's motivating."  
"Kids need money, a job, a purpose."  
"You learn the most by giving back."*

#### Caring adults & mentors

*"On the weekend we need someone to call if [expletive] is going down...they need to be accessible after office hours, even if you only see them once a month they need to be there if there is a crisis."  
"Being asked about [substance use] by someone that you're comfortable with could help you admit that you need help."  
"People need to stop talking about going down that bad path, and show you how good that other path can be."*

#### Counsellors & other professionals

*"Counselling can help with fear of rejection – I know for me, looking back, I probably did drugs because of that."*

#### Youth-specific services & spaces

*"It's so weird going to AA with a bunch of adults...We can have a voice with youth, we don't have a voice with adults because they are an overpowering presence."*

#### Timely substance use services

*"You don't get help until it's extreme. That makes no sense."*

#### Supportive schools

*"Talk about [substance use] in school."  
"I've gone to so many school counsellors who know nothing about substance use."  
"My alternative school really helped me because I had access to AA and NA meetings. There should be more of that."  
"Have smaller schools, more alternate schools that get kids doing more positive things."*



Thank you to all of the young people who shared their experiences and suggestions as part of this project.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BC'S REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- 1 Engage diverse youth who use substances in the creation and evaluation of all substance use services.
- 2 Create a youth friendly website about substance use services in BC.
- 3 Guarantee funding of services that meet the needs of all youth, with specific attention to services for Indigenous youth and their families.
- 4 Prioritize the creation of youth-specific harm reduction services, including supervised consumption sites within existing services and supports.
- 5 Train foster parents to have open and safe conversations with youth about substance use.

Download the full report: <https://rcybc.ca/timetolisten>