

## Use an Evidence-Based, Harm Reduction Approach

- ▢ Meet young people where they're at with regards to their substance use goals, recognizing that abstinence-based approaches don't work for everyone.
- ▢ Stay informed on emerging evidence as knowledge in this field is continually evolving.
- ▢ Be curious and open to adapting your approach based on new evidence.

## Recognize the Value of Lived Experience

- ▢ Acknowledge that patients are experts of their own experiences and bodies, and that each person's understanding of drug use is influenced by their lived experience.
- ▢ Understand that a purely medical perspective on drug use does not provide a holistic understanding of young people's relationship with drugs.
- ▢ Embrace opportunities for peer interventions, such as peer support programs or learning from patient experiences to gain insights and enhance empathy.

## Create Safer Spaces and Accessible Healthcare Environments

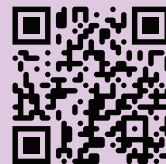
- ▢ Respond to drug use as a health issue rather than a moral or criminal issue.
- ▢ Understand that young people use substances for many different reasons and ensure you make space to explore those reasons.
- ▢ Consider incorporating casual dress, using plain and accessible language and other ways to make the environment welcoming to patients.
- ▢ Allow young people to bring friends for support, to feel less alone, and to help them advocate for themselves.
- ▢ Provide pamphlets and information in waiting areas that pertain to drug use and harm reduction best practices, and incorporate art and posters in patient areas that relate to health promotion and harm reduction for youth.

*\*\*These recommendations have been informed by the lived experiences of young people who use drugs, aged 17-25, to support healthcare providers in improving their direct interactions with young patients. We believe that these principles apply to all youth regardless of their relationship to drugs.*

You can find the full report and findings below:

[www.get sensible.org](http://www.get sensible.org)

@get\_sensible



*This work was made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.*

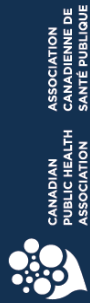
# Best Practices Checklist

## For Healthcare Providers

working with Young People Who use Drugs

*may or may not*

GET SENSIBLE



## Check Internal Bias about Drug Use

- ✓ Reflect on your own biases and assumptions about drug use, especially when working with young people from diverse communities.
- Consider if a young person's drug use is relevant to their reason for accessing care, and whether it is necessary to include in conversations around their treatments.
- Consider how biases related to age, gender, income, race, weight, ability, and other factors may intersect with your perceptions of drug use and impact patient care.\*

*\*refer to the full report for more information on intersectionality*



## Respect Youth Agency and Autonomy

- Empower young people by involving them in decision-making and respecting their autonomy and healthcare choices, especially as they relate to privacy and consent to treatment.
- Allow young people to define their healthcare goals, be open to learning from young people and the knowledge and experience they bring.
- Recognize the power and responsibility that healthcare providers hold, and learn about the histories of trauma some communities have with healthcare systems and institutions.

## Promote Open, Non-Judgmental Dialogue

- Start by exploring the function a drug may have for a young person, or their motivation for using drugs.
- Ask for permission to discuss drug use, then use open-ended questions to explore the function and motivation of substance use before moving to the harms/consequences.
- Listen when young people are expressing themselves and let them lead discussions.
- Respond to disclosures with neutrality, using compassionate, non-stigmatizing language.\*

*\*\*refer to the full report to learn more ways to improve language*

