

MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: CANNABIS: WHAT PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS NEED TO KNOW

Young people are particularly vulnerable to the risks associated with cannabis. Regular and early use of cannabis in adolescence can cause harm to the developing brain and is linked with behavioural and mental health issues. Cannabis impaired driving is also a risk for young people who are also novice drivers. Young people may choose to use cannabis out of curiosity, to “fit in” with peers and/or to help them cope with stress.

According to the 2018-2019 RRDSB School Climate Survey, 5% of students in Grade 7/8 and 22% of students in Grades 9-12 reported using cannabis within the previous 4 weeks.

How to help your child/youth make informed decisions about cannabis:

- Build a strong relationship by participating in activities with them and getting to know their friends
- Have open, ongoing conversations about the effects of cannabis and the legal risks of having, using, selling or sharing it
- Be positive! Try to avoid trying to frighten, shame or lecture your child/youth
- Focus on safety and well-being by discussing safer choices and understanding consequences
- Keep yourself informed about the facts in order to have meaningful conversations with your child/youth
- Help your child/youth explore healthy coping strategies for managing stress and peer pressure
- Be an example by using healthy coping strategies and talking honestly about your own substance use

For useful tips for talking to your child/youth about safer ways to use cannabis, refer to the following resource:

https://www.camh.ca/-/media/images/all-other-images/research-lrcug-for-youth/lrcug_for_youth-eng-pdf.pdf

For more information, please contact the RRDSB Mental Health Leader: tracey.idle@rrdsb.com

