

**Press release**  
Cannabis and Mental Health

March 10th, 2022

Toronto, ON— The Schizophrenia Society of Canada is pleased to announce the launch of [Cannabis and Mental Health](#), a comprehensive online suite of digital resources exploring a range of issues surrounding the mental health impacts of cannabis, at the individual, community and societal level. This platform includes a free 90 minute course for youth, and created by youth, as well as a mentor guide with activities for educators, peer support workers, parents and youth allies.

This youth-led project was created in collaboration with Cannabis and Psychosis: Exploring the Link, the Youth Research and Evaluation Exchange (YouthREX), and the Mental Health Commission of Canada, with funding from Health Canada’s Substance Use and Addictions Program.

The [2021 Canadian Cannabis Survey](#) (CSS) reports that almost double the percentage of cannabis use occurs at ages 16-24 than at 25 years and older. The CSS also notes that the average initiation of cannabis use ranges from 18.7-21.6 years. These results demonstrate the need to shift away from cannabis-use prevention in youth and towards providing the knowledge, tools, and support needed to safely and responsibly use cannabis.

“Since the legalization of recreational cannabis in Canada over three years ago, it’s increasingly imperative to provide young people with a critical range of perspectives and improve the way we communicate about cannabis and mental health, especially when it comes to preventing problematic use and addressing stigma”, commented Dr. Chris Summerville, CEO of Schizophrenia Society of Canada. “These engaging online resources will improve the overall understanding, attitudes, and behaviors around cannabis use and mental health, encourage safer practices, and protect and promote young people’s mental health and well-being”.

Kiah Ellis-Durity, Project Facilitator, emphasized that “The content of cannabis education must go beyond merely emphasizing associated risks and encouraging abstinence. This is especially true for harder-to-reach youth across Canada, whose realities aren’t reflected by mainstream public health approaches to cannabis use and mental health.”

Building on the strengths of each partner, centering lived experience and amplifying youth voice, we have created an engaging online curriculum featuring a diverse range of media, built with an anti-oppression and harm reduction lens.



"We are so proud of our partnership with the Cannabis & Psychosis team and their concerted effort to expand these important learning opportunities to young Canadians", said Cyril Cromwell, Director of Learning & Development, at YouthREX. "Throughout this collaboration we witnessed the power of intentional youth-adult partnerships manifest as young people took a lead role in the learning platform's innovation and development. Congratulations to everyone involved! This resource will benefit youth and youth workers across the country."

"The Mental Health Commission of Canada is excited to see a by-youth, for-youth resource that will help both youth and their allies navigate the complexities of cannabis and mental health," said Michel Rodrigue, MHCC's President and CEO. "We know there is a need for evidence-based and culturally adapted tools that remove the stigma from discussions about cannabis use and mental health. This new suite of resources will help to bridge that gap, empowering youth to make more informed decisions in the process."

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