Using Evidence to Inform Substance Misuse Prevention Initiatives  June 15, 2016

This webinar, co-hosted by Parent Action on Drugs and The Toronto Drug Strategy, aims to increase awareness in the substance use service sector about evidence-based prevention initiatives. Moving from the theoretical considerations for implementing evidence into practice and engaging youth to sharing practical case-studies and examples, this webinar provides a well-rounded synopsis of the topic.

A few webinar highlights:

- **Alexander Lovell from Youth REX** shared important considerations for implementing evidence into practice. Involving all stakeholders in a discussion around the **objectives** (why we want to initiate this work, what are signs of success?) and the **values** behind implementing it (will it be use-oriented, methods-oriented or values-oriented?) are important steps. Considering the **nature** of the evidence (what sources of evidence will be used?) and **strategies** for implementation (such as a fidelity tool check list) are critical. Ultimately, it takes a long time to move from what we know is best to do and actually doing it – but it is important to persevere because it will improve your services and show you are responding to conversations happening outside of just your organization.

- **Sharif Mahdy from The Students Commission of Canada** discussed four components of successful youth engagement programs: **head** (learning should occur), **heart** (feeling should occur), **feet** (doing should occur), and **spirit** (connection to something outside themselves should occur – e.g. others, nature, etc.). He went on to describe the peer-to-peer influence program – **Influence in Action** – designed to reduce smoking in schools, and talked about how they adapted the program in progress based on evidence that was generated from the program (i.e. feedback from peer influencers). **Ten critical features** of effective youth programs that came from an extensive literature review were also discussed.

- **Maria Papadimitriou from Delisle Youth Services** provided a Toronto-based example of an evidence-informed drug education program – **SESSIONS** – which was developed in partnership with youth. She spoke about the process involved and highlighted the fact that historically drug education has equaled drug prevention and has been about disintegrative shaming (i.e. here are the facts – it’s up to you to make the healthy choice, but if you don’t then that’s shameful and there are repercussions such as school suspension). Youth have grown to mistrust adults around the topic of drugs (because they have not been told the whole truth) and that is why the **primary focus of SESSIONS is around building trusting relationships with adults**. Maria also spoke about proven practices from the literature that have been incorporated into their program – such as Constructivism, which encourages youth to come up with their own meaning about what they are learning.

For the complete details:
- [Webinar recording](#)
- [Webinar slides](#)
- [Webinar resources](#)

For more on the topic...
We have compiled a listing of helpful resources and websites that relate to substance misuse prevention initiatives and youth engagement. A few of these resources:

**The eXchange Youth REX**
Connecting shared knowledge to youth work

**Youth Who Thrive The YMCA of Greater Toronto & United Way Toronto**
A summary of critical factors and effective programs for 12-25 year olds

**Getting High? App Delisle Youth Services**
Youth-friendly game that gets youth to stop and think before they make a decision to use drugs

---

**HC Link can support your work to address substance misuse & other issues that impact youth**

HC Link offers [Consulting Services](http://www.HCLinkOntario.ca) (free of charge) to support community-based coalitions, groups and networks. Our consultants can work with your group and provide valuable resources, tools, problem-solving, advice and mentorship to meet your specific needs.

*Contact us online or 1-855-848-1575 to start the conversation!*

---

**HC Link - Réseau CS Your resource for healthy communities**

[www.HCLinkOntario.ca](http://www.HCLinkOntario.ca) | [info@hclinkontario.ca](mailto:info@hclinkontario.ca)
[www.ReseauCS.ca](http://www.ReseauCS.ca) | [info@reseaucs.ca](mailto:info@reseaucs.ca)
416-847-1575 | 1-855-847-1575

HC Link works with community groups, organizations, and partnerships to build healthy, vibrant communities across Ontario. We offer consulting services, learning and networking events, and resources in both English and French. Our services are funded by the Government of Ontario and are provided free of charge where possible.