



REPORT ON RESISTANCE 3

YOUTH USE DRUGS WHY DENY IT?

UNCEDD X^wMəθkwəy̓ əm, Skwxwú7mesh, AND
SəlílWəta?/SELILWITULH TERRITORIES

TO ALL YOUTH WHO'S YOUNG LIFE WAS CUT SHORT DUE TO
TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS, YOU ARE MISSED
YOU WERE FAILED BY OUR GOVERNMENT DUE TO
DRUG AND HARM REDUCTION POLICIES THAT EXCLUDED YOUTH.

WE NEED A SAFE REGULATED SUPPLY SO THOSE EXPERIMENTING
+ USING ILLICIT DRUGS THAT THEY KNOW ITS SAFE

TO THE YOUTH WHO ARE FIGHTING + ADVOCATING TO HAVE
YOUR VOICE HEARD AND A SEAT AT DRUG POLICY, DECRIM, "SAFE
SUPPLY" TABLES AND MUCH MUCH MORE DONT GIVE UP KEEP
FIGHTING

THIS REPORT WAS CREATED ON
UNCEDD X^wMəθkwə́y əm, Skwxwú7mesh, AND
SəlílWətaʔ/SELILWITULH TERRITORIES

INTRODUCTION

WE UPDATED THIS FOR 2025 TO TAKE OUT SOME THINGS AND INCLUDE SOME NEW THINGS. YOUTH USE DRUGS. WHY DO WE NOT ACCEPT THIS FACT? IS IT BECAUSE WE, AS A SOCIETY, FEEL LIKE DENYING HARM REDUCTION SERVICES TO YOUNG PEOPLE WILL MAKE THEM THINK, "WELL, GUESS I WON'T BE USING DRUGS." IS IT BECAUSE WE THINK THAT WE NEED TO "SAVE" THEM? IN REALITY YOUTH ARE USING DRUGS AND OFTEN USING THEM UNSAFELY. WE CAN'T DENY THIS REALITY. WE SHOULDN'T DENY YOUTH HARM REDUCTION SERVICES AND EDUCATION BECAUSE WE THINK THAT BY NOT PROVIDING THEM WITH SUPPLIES THEY WON'T USE, OR THAT BY GIVING THEM HONEST DRUG EDUCATION THEY'LL BE MORE CURIOUS AND/OR TEMPTED TO USE DRUGS. WHY ARE WE SO AFRAID OF KEEPING YOUTH SAFE WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH WHO USE DRUGS? FEAR OR MORAL PANIC BASED MESSAGING IS HARMFUL, UNSAFE AND SOMETIMES TRAUMATIC. YOUTH ARE COMPLEX, UNIQUE AND RESILIENT. WE NEED TO ALLOW YOUTH TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES WHEN IT COMES TO SERVICES OR RESOURCES. THIS IS WHY WE NEED TO TRULY MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE AT, NOT WHERE WE WANT THEM TO BE. 126 YOUTH UNDER 19 FROM 2019-2023 DUE TO TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS. THESE DEATHS COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED IF YOUTH HAD BETTER ACCESS TO HARM REDUCTION SERVICES AND OR A YOUTH DEDICATED OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE. WE'RE 10 YEARS INTO THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS THE BC GOVERNMENT HAVE STILL FOCUSED ON SOME WORK FOR YOUTH BUT ALWAYS IN RELATION TO ABSTINENCE BASED SERVICES AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES. OFTEN USING MISGUIDED INFORMATION SUCH AS DIVERSION OF "SAFE SUPPLY" WHEN IN REALITY MOST THE PILLS YOUTH ACCESS COMES FROM HOME.

INTRODUCTION

IN THIS REPORT, THE KNOWLEDGE IS FROM THE YOUNG DRUG USERS WHOM HAD SOMETHING TO SAY AND WANTED TO SHARE THE LIVING/ED EXPERIENCE OF BEEN SOMEONE WHO USES DRUGS/SUBSTANCES

YOUTH ARE THE SOME OF THE MOST AFFECTED BY DRUG POLICY THAT TRIES TO DENY OR SHAME YOUTH INTO THINKING SUBSTANCE USE IS A BAD THING OR THEY ARE BROKEN. THEY ARE NOT THEY ARE JUST TRYING TO LIVE, SURVIVE AND COPE WITH SO-CALLED LIFE.

THESE NEED TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN HARM REDUCTION SERVICES TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUTH WHO USE DRUGS. WE HOPE THIS GIVES A VOICE TO YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT OF OFFICIAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DRUG POLICY, RECOVERY, DECRIMINALIZATION, AND AN REGULATED ILLICIT & PRESCRIPTION SAFE SUPPLY OF DRUGS. YOUTH VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD, AND WHAT THEY SAY NEEDS TO TRANSLATE INTO ACTUAL CHANGE. THE MANY VOICES THAT CONTRIBUTED THIS REPORT ARE YOUTH WHO ARE STREET INVOLVED, USE SUBSTANCES, IN RECOVERY, HOUSED. THE TOXIC DRUG CRISIS HAS IMPACTED THEIR LIVES IN BIG WAYS

HARSH TRUTH OF BEING DENIED

Age restrictions at Harm reduction services, Safe consumption sites (SCS) and Overdose prevention sites (OPS) are dangerous, harmful and unnecessary. It tells youth their life is not worth saving. Make a reasonable & fair youth policy. There is no law that says to deny youth these services. Denying youth access often leads to using unsafely, being exploited, and more. often youth will use a used needle & other equipment Now they risk infections, hep c and HIV and sometimes death from not knowing the drug last used for the IV supplies being reused

Yes, we don't want an 11 or 12 year old to be using drugs or even shooting up The reality is they are. the safest place for them to get education & connections around how to safely inject is at harm reduction or SCS or OPS

Often you can't tell if someone uses drugs, youth, often get crafty in hiding drug use. Without having open & honest conversations with youth they will keep this a secret for fear of being shamed, judged, or getting in trouble

When a youth or anyone comes to an OPS or safe injection site they know why they are there. It's rare that someone comes into one as a first timer.

Youth feel ashamed and judged when denied access to HR services, SCS & ops which results in them using alone & hidden like parking garages. not being able to talk about using drugs Being denied from one service they feel they are denied from all HR services

If a youth uses drugs doesn't mean they are incapable of making decisions for themselves or consent to things. Give them autonomy

When it comes to talking about substance use we often see something that's more of a line that goes from A-B That's not the case for many who use substances especially when it comes to youth.

Youth typically jump from one pattern to the next

For example when looking at the circle you can see a youth not engaging in substances they could easily jump to daily use then jump to curiosity next but then change that behavior and start only using with mates or be back not engaging in substances

Youth are unique when it comes to using drugs and/ or substances because their patterns of use change so often and can be seen as "problematic" one week but the next they are not engaging in substances

-Not engaging in substances

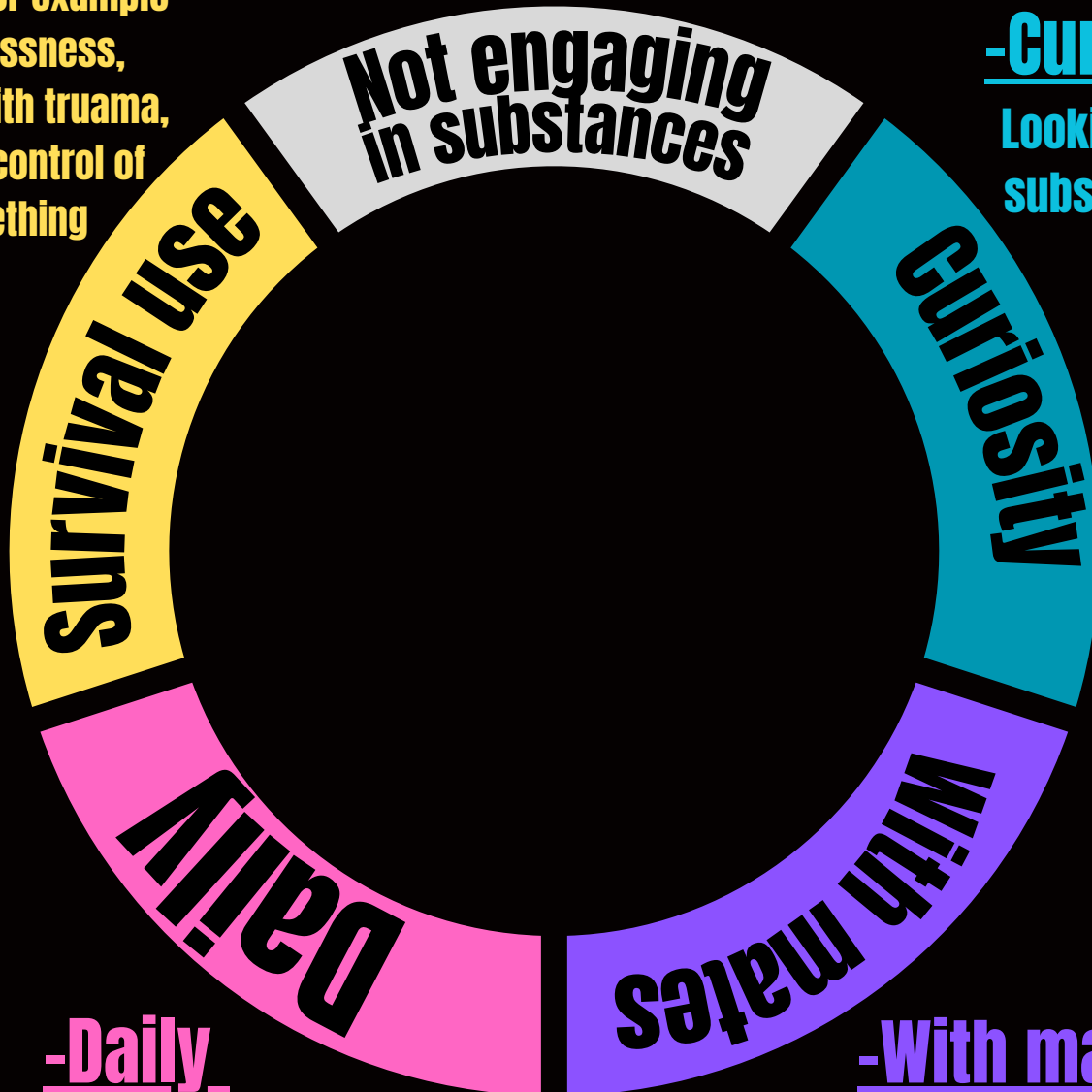
Means no use of
substances

-Curiosity

Looking to try
substances

-Survival

using to survive due
to a variety of
reasons for example
homelessness,
dealing with trauma,
to have control of
something



-Daily

using more regularly, where
its become seen or maybe
noticeable

-With mates

Often only using with
friends or with in other
groups

Youth substances use patterns

Not engaging in substance use

Meaning not engaging in substances, could be abstaining from them or many other factors why they are not

Curiosity

Experimental phase, where they are learning and trying out different substances.

With mates

Youth often pool money together to buy more and split it or do it together They often don't use drugs alone they only are using with friends

Daily

It's becoming more noticeable either through behavior, physical and or appearance changes rapidly They often are using alone

Survival use

They using to cope or deal with emotions, homelessness, grief. To have control of something when life feels out of control. To stay alive

YOUTH HARM REDUCTION SERVICES SITE

Youth that use illicit substances it's a complex issue that many don't think it is important to talk about or should be talked about due to the fact that youth using drugs is "taboo".

**Parents and caregivers often don't think it could happen to their child which means youth having open & honesty conversations about drugs
youth end up using alone, in secret and not seeking help when drug poisonings happen**

No one ever talks about keeping youth safe when it comes to youth who use drugs

This is why creating harm reduction services or education needs to be done with youth from the very start to implement the needs they have and wanting to see.

On the next few pages are some thoughts and ideas that came from youth about having a youth harm reduction site/drop in space/OPS

to ask youth to dream big or what if we had a magic wand/unlimited cash to build this was hopeless cause we know and they know it wont happen anytime soon instead they gave what they expected places to have, how they should run, and what makes a space for youth comfortable which in turn lead to a conversation about ideas and "Hopes"

The first and foremost is it needs to Be place where youth will be heard and respected with changes being implemented when needed & where applicable Staff should be Youth peer workers, who are folks who are still using, in recovery, and others who have familial experiences

YOUTH HARM REDUCTION SERVICES LOOKS AND FEEL

--Youth by youth model in terms of design for space & guidelines for the space

-Harm Reduction site must be specifically youth only Must be in an easily accessible location for example having it on a ground floor, with a semi private entrance could integrated into a youth service.

-Harm reduction sites would benefit from having a drop in space of its own where youth would be able to take a break from the streets, life and build connections

-A place where they can Eat, hydrate and shower.

Having a Youth clothing & supplies room where they can have access to clothing, hygiene, tents, etc etc

-It would benefit to have a youth specific overdose prevention site or episodic overdose prevention that includes smoking and IV

-On going Harm reduction education & best practice workshops around 'safe IV use' 'stimulant safety' 'Naloxone training' 'dealing with police' and many others suggested and led by the youth

-Making the space a youth friendly environment should incorporate ideas, art etc from the youth who will be accessing the space.

YOUTH HARM REDUCTION SERVICES THIS AND THAT

- Harm reduction supplies & education are giving & taught with best practice from BCCDC HR policy
- Age "cut off" should be discussed with youth to determine what they think is best and a case by case basis
- Transition plans in place 2 years before they "age out". This would give time for a proper 'age out' and ensure they are connected with the appropriate services or resources needed.
- No youth that is "Aging out" should be left without proper connections to services needed
- Anyone who has "Aged out" & used the service before should still be able to access supplies and food but given reminders about other services
- Its important to remember YOUTH USE DRUGS and should be giving the same DIGNITY, RESPECT, CARE and SERVICES as if often done with adults accessing harm reduction services .

ADULTS, YOU SHOULD KNOW

**YOUTH WANT PEOPLE IN THERE LIFE & THE ONES WHO OFTEN ARE
MAKING CHOICES FOR THEM TO KNOW THEY WANT TO BE HEARD
WITHOUT JUDGEMENT, GUILT OR SHAME**

**-YOUTH FEEL THE NEED FOR OPEN AND HONEST DIALOGUE WHEN IT
COMES TO TALKING ABOUT DRUGS CAUSE WHAT YOUR TELLING
THEM COULD BE FOUND ON THE INTERNET & COULD BE
MISINFORMATION**

**-THE INTERNET IS FULL OF INFORMATION BUT ALSO
MISINFORMATION SO RESEARCH**

**-DRUGS/SUBSTANCE USE DOESN'T MAKE A PERSON BAD OR SHOULD
BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY, THERE ARE PLENTY OF REASONS FOR
SOMEONE TO CHOOSE THIS**

**-TOUGH LOVE APPROACH ISN'T HELPFUL & COULD HAVE SERIOUS
CONSEQUENCES SUCH AS ISOLATION, SHAME ETC.**

**-EVERY DRUG IS DIFFERENT & WILL HAVE DIFFERENT REACTIONS
BY SAYING EVERY DRUG IS THE SAME IS MISLEADING**

**-BEEN CURIOUS AND TRYING OUT RISKY THINGS IS A NATURAL
PART OF BEEN TEEN**

WHAT YOUTH WANT

WHEN WE ASKED YOUTH WHAT WOULD AN YOUTH SPECIFIC OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE WOULD LOOK LIKE THIS IS WHAT IDEAS THEY CAME UP WITH

OPS SERVICES WITH INHALATION AND INJECTION

A YOUTH SPECIFIC OPS WOULD RUN JUST LIKE OTHER OPS JUST WITH A FOCUS ON YOUTH.

-THE YOUTH OPS WILL MAKE SURE STAFF UNDERSTAND THAT YOUTH ARE ABLE TO MAKE CHOICES FOR THEMSELVES & HAVING THE ATTITUDE OF NEEDING TO "SAVE" THEM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AS THIS APPROACH MAY SEEM HELPFUL, IT IS IN FACT HARMFUL.

-ALWAYS KEEP OTHER STAFF AND MANAGERS ABOUT YOUTH DEEMED "HIGH RISK" (THAT IF A YOUTH EXPRESSES TO HARM THEMSELVES, OTHERS OR IS ADMITTING TO ABUSE) ITS UNDERSTANDING THAT SOME YOUTH MAY NEED THIS APPROACH BUT TO ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU ARE THERE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND TO WITNESS DRUG USE ONLY.

-BY GIVING UNWANTED HELP OR TELLING THEM YOU KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR THEM COULD POTENTIALLY MAKE THEM NOT WANT TO COME BACK & WOULD TELL OTHERS TO STAY AWAY. IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER ONLY OFFER HELP OR RESOURCES WHEN ASKED AND MAKE SURE TO PROVIDE OPTIONS.

WHAT YOUTH WANT CONT

-YOUTH DRUG USE IS COMPLICATED AND PARENTS MAY STOP BY LOOKING FOR A YOUTH. YOU MUST REMEMBER CONFIDENTIALITY IS KEY EVEN IF THAT PARENT IS DESPERATE. YOU MUST INFORM THEM ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY AND REMEMBER YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THEIR RELATIONSHIP IS LIKE SO BY SAYING YES THEY ARE PUTTING THEM AT RISK.

TO REMEMBER:

YOUTH WHO USE IV OR SMOKING OFTEN APPROACHED WITH THE ATTITUDE OF 'WE GOT TO SAVE THEM' OR 'INVOLUNTARY TREATMENT IS THE ONLY WAY' TO HELP THEM. YES IT CAN BE A WAY TO SUPPORT & OR HELP THEM BUT IT'S ALSO HARMFUL TO HAVE THIS APPROACH. 'SAVING' YOUTH WHO ARE NOT READY OR ASKING FOR SUPPORT IS HARMFUL BECAUSE IT LEADS THEM TO THINKING YOU WILL ALWAYS BE AROUND. YOU WILL DROP EVERYTHING TO HELP THEM. THEY CAN BECOME DEPENDENT & SOMETIMES MANIPULATIVE FOR YOUR HELP. INVOLUNTARY TREATMENT IS HARMFUL BECAUSE YOU'RE MAKING A YOUTH DO SOMETHING WHEN THEY MAY NOT BE READY, OR SEEKING IT, AND THEY OFTEN WILL MISTRUST THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM. IF THEMSELVES OR IF A FRIEND ODS, THEY OFTEN WILL TRY AND WAIT IT OUT, WHICH COULD LEAD TO A DEATH

INVOLUNTARY CARE

Evidence has shown that forced treatment does more harm than good. Youth who already don't have trust in the health care system this would have prevented more youth from accessing health care due to their fear of being locked up, having a MCFD report done inappropriately or prematurely or their fear of police mistreatment if they call 911 for a friend who is overdosing. Now, don't get us wrong, involuntarily care is sometimes needed for a small number of youth (if they have proper support in place like a supportive home, support team)—but not all. Directions Youth Detox, Vancouver's only youth social detox, was closed a few years ago which left youth who are street involved with nowhere to go. Social detox, in the context of Directions detox, was effective because it went beyond the medical model, they truly met youth where they were at not where we think they should be at.

INVOLUNTARY CARE

A COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF US WHO BEEN THROUGH THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM AND BEEN YOUNG USING SUBSTANCES.

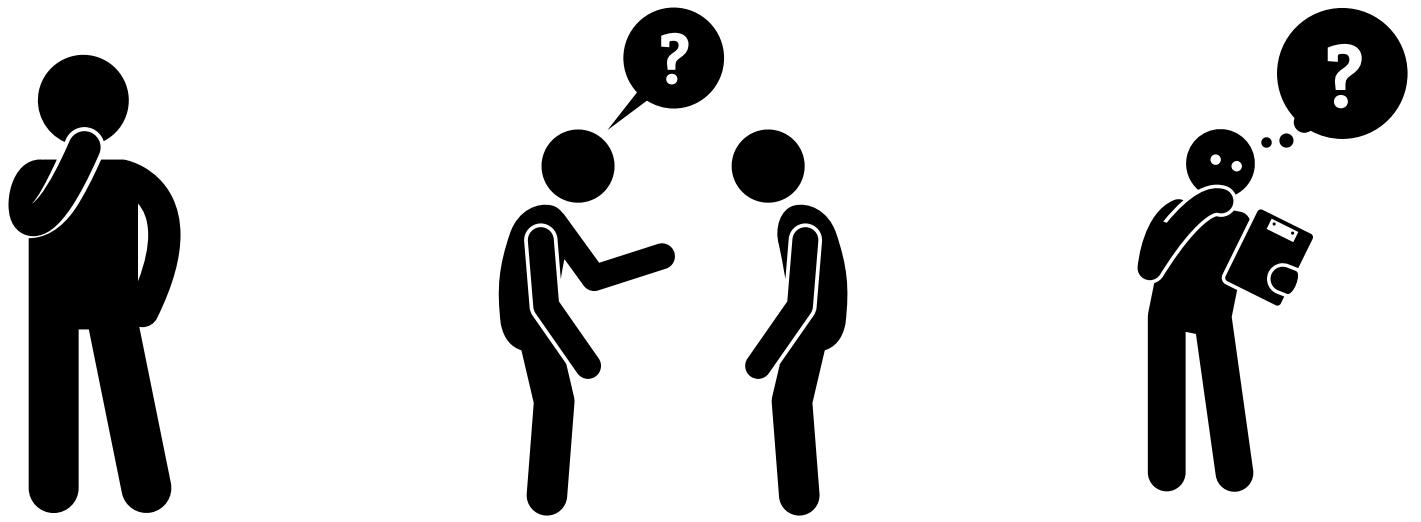
BEEN FORCED INTO DETOX OR TREATMENT MADE OUR SUBSTANCE USE DEEPER AND DROVE US TO HIDE OUR USE WHICH IN TURN PUT US AT GREATER RISK OF OVERDOSE YOUTH COMING OUT OF INVOLUNTARY CARE WOULD MORE LIKELY USE AGAIN AND THAT USE WILL MORE LIKELY BE THE SAME AS THEY WENT IN BUT WITH THEIR TOLERANCE BEING LOWER ARE AT RISK OF OVERDOSING AND THAT OVERDOSE TO BE FATAL IS HIGHER DUE TO THE UNTRUST AND FEAR OF HEALTHCARE AND BEING LOCKED UP AGAIN. WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO KEEPING KIDS OUT OF JAIL?

AS THE CHILD REPRESENTATIVE HAS SAID IN A REPORT THE NEED FOR YOUTH SPECIFIC HARM REDUCTION SERVICES IS NEEDED FOR EXAMPLE A YOUTH OPS WOULD BE A GREAT FIRST STEP. YOUTH SHOULD NOT BE ASHAMED OR GUILTED INTO TREATMENT AS INVOLUNTARY CARE WOULD BE DOING. IT WOULD BE PUTTING YOUTH AT RISK OF PREVENTABLE DEATHAS WE ALL NEED TO UNDERSTAND YOUTH USE DRUGS, IT'S A KNOWN FACT WE NEED TO STOP HIDING IT AND START TEACHING HARM REDUCTION EDUCATION AND HAVING OPEN HONEST CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DRUG USE WOULD MEAN YOUTH HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF DRUGS,

YOUTH THAT USE DRUGS

- PLEASE GET YOUR DRUGS TESTED
- DEMAND ACCESS TO HARM REDUCTION SERVICES AND EDUCATION
- FIGHT FOR SEAT AT THE TABLE OF DRUG POLICY, DECRIM AND TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS CAUSE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE A VOICE AT THESE TABLES
- DRUGS DON'T MAKE YOU A BAD PERSON, BAD DRUG POLICY DOES

**YOUTH SHOULDN'T FEAR TO CALL 911 IF
THERE FRIEND IS OVERDOSING
WE NEED TO BE BETTER AT THE
MESSAGING AND REASSURING THEM ITS
OK TO CALL 911
PHONE 911 IF YOUR FRIEND ODS
YOU WONT GET IN TROUBLE
LEARN HOW TO USE NALOXONE
GIVE BREATHS
TILL HELP ARRIVES
PEOPLE WILL BE THANKFUL THEY ARE
ALIVE**



A YOUTH ONCE ASKED IF
THEY MICROWAVE THE
BURNED POPCORN MORE WILL
IT GET UNBURNED? I GOT THE
LOGIC KIND OF
BUT NO, IT WONT
SAME THING WITH DRUGS BY
TAKING MORE WILL NOT GET
YOU LESS HIGH

THE COALITION OF PEERS DISMANTLING THE DRUG WAR
MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA

FOR MORE INFO OR TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OR HAVE QUESTIONS ON
WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUTH WHO USE DRUGS

CONTACT

KALISEDGEMORE@GMAIL.COM