



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 May 16

DRUG AWARENESS EVENTS – CHILD HEALTH TEAM

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 072-13 re “Drug Awareness Events – Child Health Team” be received for information.

Key Points

- According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 54.9% of grade 7-12 students report the use of alcohol and 22% of grade 7-12 students report the use of cannabis.
- Six hundred and twenty-six (626), grade 7 & 8 students in London and Middlesex County participated in school Drug Awareness Events.

Background

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the 2011 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 54.9% of grades 7-12 students in Ontario report the use of alcohol. Next to alcohol, cannabis is the second most commonly used drug in this age group, with 22% of students reporting usage. In response to these statistics and concern from parents, community professionals, teachers and school support staff, the Health Unit Child Health Team, with input from local police departments, developed a series of Drug Awareness Events (DAE).

Since the initiation of these events, students from London and Middlesex County have received enhanced education on alcohol and marijuana misuse. At each DAE, groups of fifteen or twenty students in grade 7 and 8 and their teachers rotate through four to five interactive stations. These engaging and interactive stations are staffed by Public Health Nurses, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) volunteers, a Youth Addiction and Mental Health Counselor from Addiction Services Thames Valley, and local police agencies. Depending on the locale of the school the police agencies involved are the OPP (Middlesex County), Strathroy-Caradoc Police Services, or the RCMP.

2012-13 School Year

During the school year 2012-13, the Child Health Team organized and facilitated eight Drug Awareness Events for over 626 grade 7 and 8 students in London and Middlesex County. Two county schools participated, Our Lady Immaculate and St. Vincent de Paul. In London, six schools were involved: Northbrae, St. David, C.C. Carothers, Princess Elizabeth, Bonaventure Meadows and Fairmont. During these events, students participated in interactive stations where they learned about decision making skills and law enforcement. These stations which were titled, Jeopardy, Think Twice, The Law, and Walk the Line allowed students to gain information and practice skills they may need when dealing with the many drug influences in our society. Jeopardy involves an interactive computer game where teams of students are given an opportunity to answer drug related questions. At the ‘Think Twice’ station students watch a DVD

called “Marijuana and Cancer” and discuss the harmful effects that smoking marijuana has on the human body. “Walk the Line” is an interactive station that provides an opportunity for students to test their gross and fine motor skills while wearing a pair of fatal vision goggles, which simulate the decrease in capabilities when a person is intoxicated. At the Addiction Services station, students are provided with skills to help them make informed decisions. Finally, “The Law” is staffed by a police service member who informs students of current laws regarding alcohol and marijuana use including enforcement and consequences.

It is recognized that one event is only the beginning of student education about drugs. Repeated messages and answers to students’ questions are invaluable. To that end, Public Health Nurses on the Child Health Team support schools by directing them to the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum. Follow-up resource packages are also provided to each teacher in attendance to encourage continued education in the classroom. Packages include CAMH publications on alcohol and marijuana, highlights from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, discussion questions, internet resources, poster and essay contests from the Knights of Columbus and MADD, as well as other community resources.

Conclusion

In the early stages of implementation, feedback from teachers, parent volunteers and students indicated this is an effective delivery method. Changes based on student and teacher feedback have been made to further increase the impact of Drug Awareness Events. A more intensive evaluation is planned for the 2013-14 school year. Collaborative initiatives like Drug Awareness Events provide Public Health Nurses with an excellent opportunity to partner with community agencies to deliver health messages to a large number of students in a short period of time.

This report was prepared by Ms. Susan Luciani, Public Health Nurse, and Ms. Suzanne Vandervoort, Manager, Child Health Team.

Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health