



Family Support & Harm Reduction

CAAN

Communities, Alliances & Networks

Knowledge Bundle 4



Dr. Peter
Centre



“Once all families come together into an agreement on this topic and address all of the harm that is happening, that is when all family is united.”

– James Quatell, Elder in Residence CAAN
Communities, Alliances & Networks



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A four-pointed star graphic, rendered in a bright orange color, positioned at the bottom center of the page. The background continues to feature the textured paper-like surface and soft circular shapes.

A photograph of a white wolf and its pup in a forest setting. The adult wolf is in the foreground, looking down at the pup. The pup is looking up at the camera. The background is a blurred forest floor with dry leaves and twigs. There is a yellow starburst graphic on the right side of the image.

How do I support my Family Member/Friend in Harm Reduction?

Destigmatize

Address negative biases, behaviors, language, and attitudes toward substance use. Educate yourself and others on substance use and harm reduction.

Relationship-Building

Establish a safe and judgment-free relationship. Treat them with love, respect, compassion, and kindness so they feel comfortable turning to you for support.

Culture

Culture provides healing. Connect them to safe cultural treatment programs that offer ceremonies, traditions, knowledge, language, and connecting to the land.

Wholism

Understanding your contributions to support your loved one's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being will benefit your environment and everyone connected to it.

Respect

Understanding your contributions to support your loved one's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being will benefit your environment and everyone connected to it.

Self-Determination

Allow them to exercise self- determination so they feel in control of their healing journey. They know what is best for them.

Connect

Connect them to peer support programs for additional support and guidance. A peer with lived experiences can share similarities and connect them to additional resources.

Reduce Harm

Find free naloxone kits near you and carry them for emergencies. Discover safe injection sites that offer clean spoons, needles, bleach, and safe sex materials. As well, as HIV, HCV, & STBBI testing and treatment services.



Eliminate Substance Use Stigma & Embrace Social Supports

Stigma against people who use substances involves negative attitudes, beliefs, language, behaviors, and discrimination. This can be present in interpersonal relationships, putting a barrier to having social support networks and increasing isolation.

(W) Holistic Values & Social Supports

We are all interconnected. Our contributions in supporting our loved ones through their healing journey benefit our whole environment and everyone in it.

Destigmatize Through Harm Reduction

Strong beliefs of abstinence further stigmatize substances, create barriers to services and cultural practices, and increase isolation.

Harm reduction corresponds with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. It focuses on mitigating the harms of colonialism and substance use, as well as addressing one's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Promote Wellness Through:

- Making one feel safe, loved, and respected.
- Meeting one where they are at.
- Let them be in control of their healing journey.
- Carrying around free Naloxone kits. Advocating for safe injection sites.
- Connecting one to harm reduction resources and services.
- Don't exclude someone who uses substances from cultural activities and social events.
- Step away from exclusive language (e.g. "being/staying clean").



Ceremonies for Families & Friends to Participate In and Their Significance

Ceremonies and traditional practices can be beneficial to those who use substances, as well as their family member and friends who are supporting them in their healing journey. It benefits strengthening relationships with family, friends, and communities as it provides the person who uses substances to feel a sense of belonging. It also provides a connection to their cultural identity. Harm reduction organizations and community organizations should make these practices accessible and inclusive to those who use substances and their support networks.



Sweat-Lodge Ceremony

This purification ritual represents the womb of Mother Earth, where participants can give thanks and ask for healing, hope, guidance, and forgiveness. The purification takes form in a (w)holistic way through a mental, physical, and spiritual manner. Participants can feel more strongly connected to themselves, their culture, and their community. Following the ceremony, a feast is held.



Smudging Ceremony

Similar to the sweat-lodge ceremony, a smudging ceremony is used for (w)holistic purification, in a mental, spiritual, or physical manner. It is a sacred ritual that involved participants burning sage or other sacred medicines (cedar or sweetgrass). These sacred medicines are burned with the intention of healing or pray to the Creator and spirits for guidance through personal journeys.



Pipe Ceremony

This ceremony offers a space for respectful and truthful conversation, as well as agreements. The sacred plant, tobacco, is blessed and the pipe carrier begins the passing of the tobacco across the ceremony circle. The pipe will continue to be passed several times as the pipe carrier says prayers. When the ceremony closes, each member of the circle gets the chance to share a few words of gratitude.



Powwow Ceremony

Powwow ceremonies are not just for celebration, but for healing. It provides the opportunity to give gratitude, celebrate, and prepare for various difficulties and struggles. Celebrations consist of singing, music, entertainment, dancing, and food. The socialization with family and community members further fosters relationships and connection to culture.



Looking for more information?

Visit our website www.caan.ca to learn more about harm reduction services and promising wise practices when working with Indigenous peoples, their families, and their communities.



Scan for CAAN's
Family Support
Short Video

Additional Resources

- CAAN's Indigenous Harm Reduction = Reducing the Harms of Colonialism caan.ca/tools-and-resources/resource/indigenous-harm-reduction-reducing-the-harms-of-colonialism/
- Visit canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/naloxone.html#5 to locate free Naloxone kits across Canada.
- Visit catie.ca/resource/naloxone-administration to access CATIE's Naloxone Administration Training Module
- Check out First Nation's Health Authority's How Can Provide Support to a Loved One Who is Using Substances? & How Can We Support Loved Ones Who Want to Move Away From Using Toxic Street Drugs Panel Discussion on YouTube

References

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2. Kraska, A. (2022). Cultural Practices in Native American Substance Abuse Treatment. Puget Sound Royal Life Centres.
3. (n.d.). Important Indigenous Ceremonies. Tribal Trade.
4. Burke, M. (2000). Powwow - a healing experience. Aboriginal Multi-Media Society.



To Learn More

Visit our website www.caan.ca
to access our information sheets that
provide wise and promising practices
recommendations to implement in
your services.



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