



Cannabis Prevention

alternative to suspension program



New England (HHS Region 1)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

PREPARED BY

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www.pttcnetwork.org/newengland

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



New England PTTC

Acknowledgement

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About the Author

Dan is the Executive Director of the Chariho Youth Task Force, a substance use prevention and mental health promotion coalition in southern Rhode Island. Dan also serves as the Director of Advocacy for the American Lung Association in RI and MA. Dan's educational background is in prevention science, social marketing, nonprofit management, and public health. Dan has worked at the state, local, and national level with nonprofits and state and federal agencies. In his career, Dan has served as a lead activism trainer and has traveled coast to coast delivering training and technical assistance to hundreds of thousands of students, educators, and medical professionals.

Recently, Dan was recognized for his impact in the world of tobacco control and received the C. Everett Koop Unsung Hero Award in honor of the late United States Surgeon General. The Rhode Island General Assembly named Dan the "Advocate of the Year" while he was in high school and as the state's "Champion for Children and Youth" in 2018. Dan volunteers his time with a variety of nonprofits including serving as the National Board Chair of SADD, Vice Chair of his local YMCA, Vice Chair of Wood River Health Services, Treasurer of the Rhode Island Certification Board, and as a community advisor to Brown University's School of Public Health.



Language Matters

Words have power

Please note that very specific language is being intentionally used throughout this toolkit. Language is critically important in substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. The words we use are impactful and should be used to breakdown stigma and stereotypes rather than to perpetuate them. Unless in a direct quote, the use of the term "marijuana" will be avoided in this toolkit. In its place, "cannabis" will be used.

"Marijuana" originated as a Mexican word and unfortunately has been used to discriminate and paint negative perceptions of people from that culture. Many prevention professionals urge others to not participate in that bias and to avoid the use of that term as well. "Cannabis" is the scientific name for the plant and includes all products derived from it.

The use of affirming language inspires hope.

LANGUAGE MATTERS.

Words have power.

PEOPLE FIRST.

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.

This toolkit will also use the recommended practice of person-first language when discussing people who use substances and those who have substance use disorders. People are more than their diagnoses and stigma can act as a barrier, preventing folks from seeking treatment due to feelings of shame.

Land Acknowledgement

The New England PTTC acknowledges that we are all on the traditional lands of native people. In Augusta, Maine, the PTTC works from the ancestral lands of the Abenaki People, part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. We have a responsibility to acknowledge our Indigenous connections and the histories of Indigenous land dispossession. We encourage you to learn more about the stewards of the land you live and work on by working with your native neighbors, and by visiting <https://native-land.ca/>





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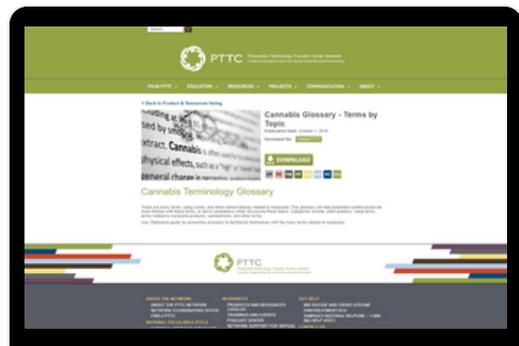
Cannabis Prevention

Where to learn more

It is important for the prevention community to know and understand the risks related to cannabis, especially in a time of changing laws, rules, and regulations in the region. The New England PTTC has curated a page of resources to bring together the latest health advisories from the CDC, CADCA, and other federal partners, as well as the health departments and organizations of the six New England States.



[Web Resources](#)



[Cannabis Glossary](#)





Alternative to Suspension Programs

Evidence of Effectiveness

Two decades of research show that out-of-school suspension is an educationally unsound solution. Furthermore, the use of zero tolerance policies has shown they are not an effective means for changing student behavior. Those policies are associated with no meaningful change in substance use, lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and worse school climate. Students who are suspended are far more likely to drop out and get involved with the juvenile justice system.

There are many prevention and intervention strategies that have been proven effective in addressing school-based misconduct such as the use of substances. Restorative justice, non-punitive, alternative-to-suspension programs require little to no school resources and have been shown to be far more effective than exclusionary measures such as suspension.

This Alternative to Suspension Cannabis Prevention program is designed to replace punitive discipline for cannabis related infractions and instead introduce the student to new information, resource, and a supportive adult in hopes of creating healthy behavioral change.

Learn More:

The Duke Center for Child and Family Policy, School of Public Health, and Law Clinic published [a report about alternative to suspension programs](#)





Case Study

Chariho Regional School District

The Chariho Youth Task Force has implemented an indicated prevention program starting in 2019 for student who have broken the school substance use policy. Rather than being suspended, students were referred to an educational retreat program (results below) and to an in-school session with a Student Assistance Counselor.

Total Number of Students: 97

Knowledge transfer:

- Pre-test Average Score: 62.5%
- Post-test Average Score: 95%

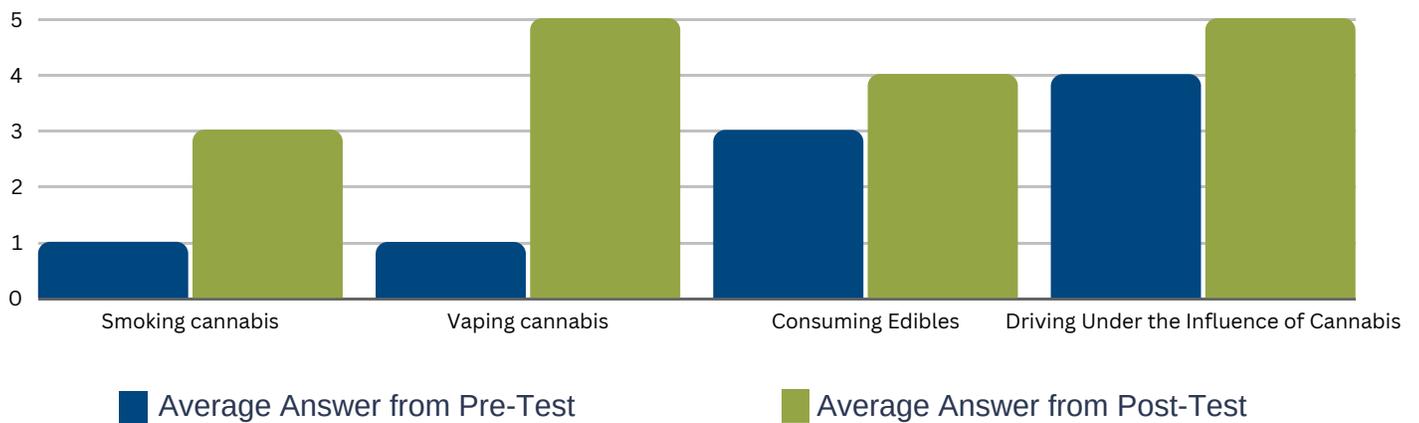
Self-Identified Use of Cannabis:

- Never Used: 6%
- Have tried: 54%
- Currently Use: 26%
- Frequently Use: 14%

Program Tip:

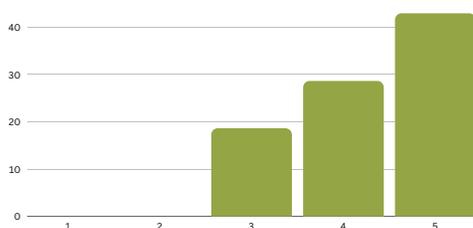
No matter how great the program might be, without buy-in from administration, a policy and referral process, it will not be effective.

Change in Perception of Harm



Y Axis: Ranging from 1 (No Harm) to 5 (Extreme Harm)

How impactful was this program?



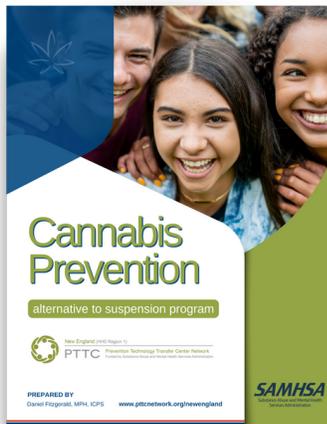
Student Comments:

- Makes you realize that its actually worse then you think.
- Really helpful but I knew had knowledge already
- It was something that seems to have been set up good and definitely educated me
- I wanted to hate this but I learned a lot

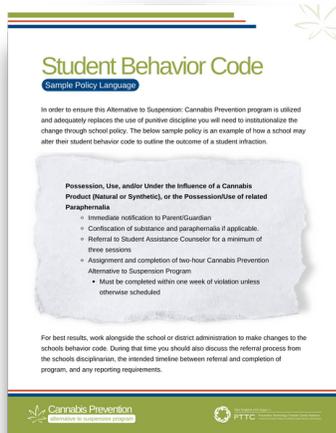
Program Components

Alternative to Suspension Program

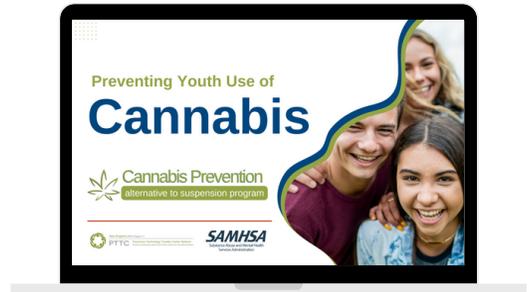
In order to prepare you to implement the Cannabis Prevention: Alternative to Suspension program you will be provided the following components.



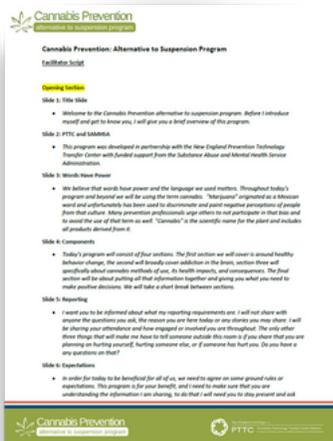
Program Guide



Sample School Policy



4-Part Slide Deck



Facilitator Script



Student Worksheets



Facilitator Training (Coming Soon)



Student Behavior Code

Sample Policy Language

In order to ensure this Alternative to Suspension: Cannabis Prevention program is utilized and adequately replaces the use of punitive discipline you will need to institutionalize the change through school policy. The below sample policy is an example of how a school may alter their student behavior code to outline the outcome of a student infraction.

Possession, Use, and/or Under the Influence of a Cannabis Product (Natural or Synthetic), or the Possession/Use of related Paraphernalia

- Immediate notification to Parent/Guardian
- Confiscation of substance and paraphernalia if applicable.
- Referral to Student Assistance Counselor for a minimum of three sessions
- Assignment and completion of two-hour Cannabis Prevention Alternative to Suspension Program
 - Must be completed within one week of violation unless otherwise scheduled

For best results, work alongside the school or district administration to make changes to the schools behavior code. During that time you should also discuss the referral process from the schools disciplinarian, the intended timeline between referral and completion of program, and any reporting requirements.

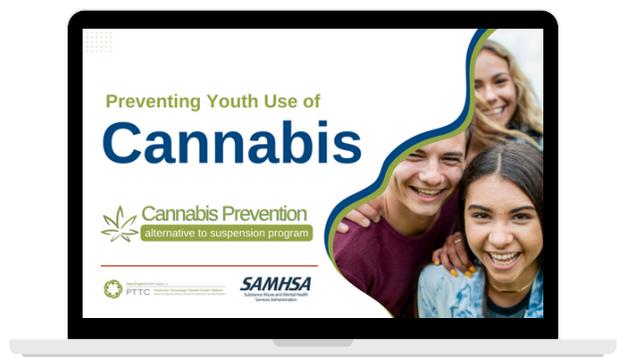


Training Materials

Alternative to Suspension Program

In order to maximize the impact of the Cannabis Prevention Alternative to Suspension Program, you should implement the program as intended. Prior to implementing this program, read through the entirety of the program materials including the presenters script that aligns with the slides.

- **Program Slides**
 - Intro, Reporting, and Expectations
 - Healthy Behavior Change
 - Addiction in the Brain
 - Cannabis 101
 - Positive Decision Making



[Live Slides](#) [PDF Slides](#)

- **Facilitator Script**
 - The script is imbedded within the slide deck or can be downloaded by [clicking here](#)

• Participant Handouts / Activities

Healthy Behavior Change
Interactive Quiz

What stage of change did you get?
Do you agree with that answer? Why or why not?

Stages of Change: Matching Definitions
Where are you? Addiction in the Brain

Addiction in the Brain
Draw a line from the word to its correct definition

Addiction The space between two nerve cells where neurotransmitters pass

Dopamine A neurotransmitter that is used to tell our brains what's important

Pruning While our brain is developing we are creating lots of different pathways

Tolerance Our brains way of keeping what it things is important

Synapse When a person no longer responds to a drug in the way they did at first.

Myelination When a person stops using a drug, their body goes through withdrawal

Dependence A disease that can result from taking drugs or alcohol repeatedly.

Cannabis 101
Crossword Puzzle

Words: None

1. An type of weed that makes a person feel like they are not using 6. Cannabis makes it hard to focus or make things seem clear

2. A condition that leads to the weakening of mental 7. It is illegal in the majority of age while using cannabis

3. A type of weed that makes a person feel like they are not using 8. The withdrawal symptoms of cannabis

4. A type of weed that makes a person feel like they are not using 9. The withdrawal symptoms of cannabis

5. A type of weed that makes a person feel like they are not using 10. The withdrawal symptoms of cannabis

Cannabis 101
Crossword

Positive Decision Making
Write down examples of healthy coping mechanisms in each section

Support System	Creativity
Movement	Community Involvement
Self-Care	Hobby

Positive Decision Making - Coping



Pre & Post Survey

Alternative to Suspension Program

Measuring the impact of this program is important. The sample pre-test below is designed to be given prior to the start of the program. It contains voluntary questions about prior use, perception of harm, and overall knowledge level related to cannabis.



[Sample Pre-test](#)



[Sample Post-test](#)

Recommendation:

It is recommended that you create your own version of the pre and post test to ensure you receive the data from your participants





Appendix

Cannabis Prevention: Alternative to Suspension Program

- **Cannabis Prevention:**

- Boumparis, N., Loheide-Niesmann, L., Blankers, M., Ebert, D. D., Korf, D., Schaub, M. P., Spijkerman, R., Tait, R. J., & Riper, H. (2019, May 14). Short- and long-term effects of digital prevention and treatment interventions for cannabis use reduction: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0376871619301498>
- Moreno, M. A., Gower, A. D., Jenkins, M. C., Kerr, B., & Gritton, J. (2018, July 2). Marijuana promotions on Social Media: Adolescents' views on prevention strategies - substance abuse treatment, prevention, and policy. *BioMed Central*. Retrieved from <https://substanceabusepolicy.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13011-018-0152-7>
- Nicksic, N. E., Do, E. K., & Barnes, A. J. (2019, November 10). Cannabis legalization, tobacco prevention policies, and cannabis use in e-cigarettes among youth. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0376871619305071>
- Winters, A. M., Malouff, J. M., & Schutte, N. S. (2022, March 28). The association between the five-factor model of personality and problem cannabis use: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0191886922001398>

- **Model School Policy**

- Fay, J. C. (2021, July 20). Connecticut's new marijuana law and its ramifications for independent schools. *School Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.ctschoollaw.com/2021/07/connecticuts-new-marijuana-law-and-its-ramifications-for-independent-schools/>
- Magier, M. J., Leatherdale, S. T., Wade, T. J., & Patte, K. A. (2021, March 3). Disciplinary approaches for cannabis use policy violations in Canadian Secondary Schools. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7967611/>



Appendix

Cannabis Prevention: Alternative to Suspension Program

- **Alternative to Suspension Programs:**

- ACLU of Southern California. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.aclusocal.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Ev-Based-Practices-LCFF-Discipline-Toolkit.3.17.14.public.pdf>
- Advancement Project Alternatives to suspension expulsion and school ... (2021). Retrieved from <https://pbisworld.com/wp-content/uploads/Advancement-Project-Alternatives-to-Suspension-Expulsion-and-School-Based-Arrest.pdf>
- Owen, J., Wettach, J., & Hoffman, K. C. (2015). School discipline: Suspensions & expulsions: Duke University School of Law. School Discipline: Suspensions & Expulsions | Duke University School of Law. Retrieved from <https://web.law.duke.edu/childedlaw/schooldiscipline/>
- Peterson, R. L. (n.d.). Impact: Volume 18, Number 2: Ten alternatives to suspension. Impact | Volume 18, Number 2 | Ten Alternatives to Suspension | Institute on Community Integration Publications. Retrieved from <https://publications.ici.umn.edu/impact/18-2/ten-alternatives-to-suspension>

- **Prevention Technology Transfer Center Resources**

- Glossary of Cannabis Terms: <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/global-pttc/product/cannabis-glossary-terms-topic>
- Cannabis Health Advisories - <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-pttc/focus-cannabis-prevention#health>
- New England Resources - <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-pttc/focus-cannabis-prevention#states>
- Federal and State Cannabis Laws - <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-pttc/focus-cannabis-prevention#laws>
- Cannabis Prevention Hubs - <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-pttc/focus-cannabis-prevention#hubs>



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