



420 – April 20th

FACTS, FICTION AND CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH YOUTH

The SACY initiative supports open and honest dialogue about substance use. We hope you will find this document helpful in supporting open conversations, before, during and after April 20th with youth on the subject of marijuana, their choices and their safety.

What is '420'?

'420' – pronounced 'four twenty' - is a term used primarily in North America to refer to the consumption of cannabis (marijuana) and, by extension, a term often used to identify oneself with cannabis subculture. 420 observances are based on time – 4:20pm – as well as date – April 20th. On April 20th there will be a rally and gathering that will be attended by several thousand participants and onlookers.

How can we, as adults, support youth safety?

As adults, it is important to help youth get the support and safety facts they need. At this time of year, many students may have questions about marijuana. You may feel that some students would benefit from discussing their thoughts about 420 with someone who has specific knowledge on the subject and who can help sort the myths from the facts. The SACY Youth Engagement worker at your school is someone you can contact if you'd like them to have a conversation with a particular student you're concerned about. SACY staff are also available to help school staff expand their knowledge and develop creative, "best practice" ways to talk to students about these issues. To contact your SACY worker please go to: www.vsb.bc.ca/sacy/contacts

What youth need to know & how we can talk to youth about marijuana as caring adults.

As caring adults, we are in a great position to engage with young people on the subject of marijuana. Having youth generate ideas about the commonly held beliefs of marijuana use is a good way to encourage dialogue. Here are some additional conversation starters and speaking points to help you start open and honest conversations with young people:

- Virtually all teens will need to make choices around marijuana use at some point and some are doing so every day. Most teens choose not to smoke marijuana or to attend 420. A great conversation starter with youth around this issue is to ask young people 'Why do you think some people choose not to smoke weed?' It's a great way to find out the risks and potential harms that kids are aware of and to encourage thoughtfulness.
- Although there are many different opinions about the legalization, medical use, recreational use and prohibition of cannabis, it is important that youth have adults with whom they can critically discuss

marijuana use. The issue of ‘legalization’ is usually of interest to youth and when it’s introduced into the conversation, it’s good to speak to the fact that if cannabis were to be decriminalized it would still remain a prohibited substance for minors just as alcohol is, due to the higher risks it poses to young people.

- At this time of the year with 420 approaching, it is important that we help down play the glorification of cannabis culture while providing facts about the potential harms of marijuana use. A conversation starter with youth around the issue is, “Do you think there are harms associated with smoking marijuana?” Youth should know that there are different risks associated with marijuana use for adults and youth and there are great benefits to avoiding or delaying marijuana use as a teen.
- Many youth might suggest that they see marijuana as being ‘natural’ and thus ‘non-harmful’. Having conversations to help expand youth thinking on this aspect is important and you can help by supporting youth in understanding that there are harms that come with smoking weed that are beyond lung damage. For example, youth have identified that marijuana use and the lifestyle that often goes with it can have consequences that negatively impact the following aspects of their lives:

<i>romantic relationships</i>	<i>stress with family</i>	<i>stress with peer groups</i>	<i>being judged</i>
<i>coping skills</i>	<i>legal issues</i>	<i>ability to travel</i>	<i>school performance</i>
<i>trust building</i>	<i>employability</i>	<i>reputation</i>	<i>identity</i>
<i>diet</i>	<i>financial</i>	<i>risk taking</i>	<i>motivation</i>

Through open discussion youth have been able to identify that marijuana use can impact their:

- *Mental health (especially related to anxiety and depression, memory changes and paranoia)*
- *Ability to get support early because marijuana use can mask symptoms of depression and anxiety*
- *Interest in passions and participation in hobbies and recreational activities*
- *Ability to have honest relationships with friends and family*
- *Sense of control in their lives – may feel like they need to use marijuana to feel ‘normal’*
- *Health (overall health and immune system health)*

Learn more about cannabis at: <http://heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/cannabis>,
<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/cannabis.pdf>,
<http://ncpic.org.au/>;
https://www.unodc.org/documents/ungass2016//Contributions/UN/WHO/16015_The_health_and_social_effects_of_non_medical_cannabis_Report_for_Web.pdf

420 101 – Some information

Regardless of our opinion about 420, here are some facts and common misperceptions about the event:

What’s the origin of 420?	In the early 1970s a small group in northern California used to meet at a designated location every day to smoke pot at 4:20 pm. "420" became a general euphemism for "time to light up." The catchphrase moved beyond California, it is now used worldwide. Today 420 is, whether expressed in the form 4:20 (as a time of day), 4/20 (as a calendar date), or just the unadorned numeral (pronounced "four-twenty"), an unofficial symbol for the use and appreciation of marijuana.
What about 420 in Vancouver?	In Vancouver, the annual rally at the Art Gallery on 20 April is also a political event supporting the decriminalization of marijuana.
What about youth	It is important for youth to know that many pro-marijuana advocates are

attending 420? It is a publicly held event after all?	aware of and speak openly about the potential harms of marijuana use and misuse and the specific risks for youth. It is also important for youth to know that advocates feel that youth presence at the event negatively impacts the political cause.
Is public marijuana consumption legal on 420 (April 20th)?	Police recognize it as a day of protest and much substance related behavior is tolerated. However, arrests can be made at such events. Many people believe that the police can not enforce laws on this day. That is false.
420 Myths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 420 isn't the date Bob Marley died, (he died on 5/11/81). It's not his birthday, either. ▪ 420 isn't the number of a bill in US Congress to legalize pot, despite many people thinking it is. ▪ 420 isn't the police or penal code for marijuana possession in California (or any other state), though many people believe that, as well. ▪ 420 is not the number of chemical compounds in found in cannabis, the marijuana plant, though many authors seem fond of stating so.

Please connect with a SACY staff person affiliated with your school for information, support and resources:
www.vsb.bc.ca/sacy/contacts

We thank you for your support and attention.

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