



# Background to Postsecondary Education Partnership – Alcohol Harms

## Introduction

Canadian colleges and universities are taking steps to address the shared concern of reducing alcohol-related harms on campus.

A survey of 34,039 students from 32 Canadian campuses, conducted by the Canadian Consortium of the American College Health Association – National College Health Assessment in 2013, identified many of the challenges faced by institutions. For example, just over one-quarter (26.8%) of students who drink reported drinking seven or more drinks the last time they “partied” or socialized, well above the limits recommended by Canada’s Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines of no more than two drinks for women and three for men on a given day. Students also reported negative consequences from their drinking, such as doing something they later regretted (38.5%); forgetting where they were or what they did (31.2%); having unprotected sex (20.8%); or physically injuring themselves (19.9%).

The need for a collaborative framework to help address alcohol-related harms on Canadian college and university campuses was recognized in November 2014 when nearly 40 university and college leaders, supporting organizations and national public health organizations met in Ottawa. The formation of this collaborative was inspired by a similar group in the United States, the National College Health Improvement Program (NCHIP), a consortium of 31 universities dedicated to sharing best practices in an attempt to reduce alcohol harms. Acadia University, the only Canadian member and a founding member of NCHIP, took the initiative to establish a similar collaborative in Canada.

The Postsecondary Education Partnership – Alcohol Harms (PEP–AH) will provide a framework to assist postsecondary educational institutions in making evidence-based decisions on the application of alcohol policies, the sharing of best practices and the regular evaluation of initiatives.

Stakeholder organizations involved in the efforts include the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Universities Canada, the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations.

## Mission

To maximize the positive development, success and general wellbeing of students, PEP–AH aims to reduce harms related to alcohol consumption at Canadian universities and colleges. PEP–AH will make use of an evidence-based approach, common indicators, and an open sharing of strategies and results. PEP–AH will foster the exchange of knowledge and experience among its member institutions and partners with a view to reducing alcohol-related harms at universities and colleges across the country.



## Vision

Colleges and universities are identified as communities where serious harms related to alcohol consumption do not happen. Students can expect to join a learning environment that does not encourage the consumption of harmful amounts of alcohol.

## Values

1. We ensure that students will not only be partners in all aspects of PEP–AH, from planning to programs implementation, but will become its champions and leaders.
2. We respect student privacy and confidentiality.
3. We respect institutional confidentiality. We do not use data in ways that pit one institution against another or create negative comparison.
4. We are committed to developing, implementing and sharing new strategies and approaches, even if they are not always successful, in order to quickly find the methods that do work.
5. We will measure results to learn from our collective experiences.
6. We will work with partners who can help us achieve our vision.

## Objectives

### *Year 1 Objectives*

PEP–AH will aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. Each member institution’s president will sign off on the charter;
2. Each member institution will establish its campus team;
3. Member institutions will develop data management plans, measure results and report; and
4. Each member institution will be ready to report on at least one alcohol harms reduction strategy at the annual national meeting.

### *Year 5 Objective*

PEP–AH will share best practices developed with the help of a full college and university cycle of student alcohol use data. More specifically we will:

1. Develop a repository of initiatives, case studies, best practices and policies;
2. Publish the first report on Canadian best practices in alcohol-related harm reduction efforts based on collected data; and
3. Develop a baseline understanding of the Canadian university and college environment as it relates to reducing the harms of alcohol.

## Obligations and Expectations of Member Institutions

1. Agree to a **minimum five-year commitment** to PEP–AH, at which point the partnership will be assessed;



2. Have the president sign off on the charter;
3. Ensure development of a campus team, which will include one senior administrator, to lend energy and provide focus to the work of PEP–AH;
4. Participate in an annual national meeting to share ideas and reflections on strategies;
5. Ensure collection of the information necessary for the data management plan approved by PEP–AH;
6. Interact with partners and relevant provincial and federal agencies; and
7. Contribute aggregate and anonymous data, as prescribed within the charter.

## Governance and Steering Group

Volunteers from partner institutions and organizations will be required to serve on a national committee to steer the work of PEP–AH. Suggested committee membership:

- 1 Co-chair representing Canadian universities and colleges
- 1 Co-chair representing the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
- 4 regional representatives (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, West)
- 4 regional student representatives (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, West)
- 1 data management specialist
- 1 communications specialist
- 1 Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse representative
- 1 Universities Canada representative
- 1 Colleges and Institutes Canada representative
- 1 National Alcohol Strategy Advisory Committee representative

## Membership

After initial membership is solidified, new members will be considered on an annual basis, ensuring work continues at an efficient pace. New members will be required to apply by February 1 to be added to PEP–AH at the May (spring) annual national meeting. This requirement will allow PEP–AH to ensure an appropriate transition process so that the new members can engage in PEP–AH with ease.

## Contribution

As PEP–AH moves forward and becomes more operationalized, member institutions might be asked to contribute a small membership fee to support a part-time support person, cover administrative costs or develop common approaches. The fee is estimated to be between \$500 to \$1,000.

## Partnerships

PEP–AH will include organizations that share similar missions and values. It will include Universities Canada, the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Colleges and Institutes Canada, and regional and national student associations.



## Critical Success Factors

- Member engagement in the culture of information and knowledge sharing
- High-level (president and vice-president) buy in at all member institutions
- Student involvement, participation and leadership
- Faculty and staff involvement and leadership
- Campus-wide commitment
- Partner engagement

