

# Youth Harm Reduction Award

## Information & Guidelines

Regional Harm Reduction, Addiction Medicine and  
Substance Use, Island Health  
Updated November 2024



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# Background

## Award

This award was inspired by three youth at a high school in the Greater Victoria region whose commitment, advocacy, and passion over several years allowed them to actualize the goal of providing harm reduction training to youth in their school as well as other local schools. Their motivation to make a difference stemmed from the fatal unregulated drug poisoning of a friend. The Island Health Harm Reduction team was moved by this incredible dedication to advancing knowledge, creating change, and helping reduce the risk of harm for themselves and other young people. These youth demonstrated courage, strength, and resilience in making their goal become a reality. With this award, the Regional Harm Reduction team would like to honour this work and encourage other young people to engage with harm reduction in their communities.

The three youth who inspired this award were the recipients of the inaugural Youth Harm Reduction Award (2021), in recognition of their harm reduction advocacy, commitment, and vision.

## Harm Reduction

Harm reduction seeks to find positive ways for people to be safer doing what they do without requiring people to stop what they're doing. It is a set of principles, practices, and approaches that aim to minimize negative health, social, and legal impacts associated with activities. These activities often relate to sexual activity, sex work, substance use, and the criminalization of people who use drugs.

Widely accepted harm reduction practices include the use of seatbelts, bicycle helmets, condoms, speed limits, and sun screen. Within the context of the toxic drug crisis in BC, harm reduction often refers to safer consumption models, safer drug use supplies, and naloxone.

The guiding principles of harm reduction are:

- Be respectful, compassionate, and non-judgmental/non-stigmatizing
- Embody cultural humility for cultural safety
- Be flexible and adaptable
- Use pragmatic, simple approaches
- Promote meaningful engagement and self-determination
- Be guided by the social determinants of health and health equity
- Be evidence-informed
- Be trauma and violence-informed
- Be strengths-based, person-centered, and family and chosen family inclusive

# Overview

## Sponsorship

This award is sponsored by Island Health's Regional Harm Reduction Team within Addiction Medicine and Substance Use.

## Other Agency Involvement

Other agencies may become involved in this process, including, but not limited, to:

- Individual schools and/or school districts
- Award recipient families
- Businesses seeking to be involved in sponsorship

## Contact

For more information, please email [harmreduction@islandhealth.ca](mailto:harmreduction@islandhealth.ca)

# Award

## Components

- One (1) award for one (1) project (regardless of number of people involved) each calendar year, including:
  - \$1000
    - if a group project, group is responsible for allocation of funds if divided
  - A framed certificate for each recipient
  - A letter signed by Island Health Chief Medical Health Officer (CMHO) for each recipient

## Criteria

- Youth under age 19
- Living in any community within the Island Health region (includes the southern Gulf Islands)
- Any independently conceptualized, developed, and implemented project related to a substance use harm reduction opportunity or gap
- Any form of project that advances public health harm reduction in their region, community, or local environment
- Project impact at the community, population, or individual level

## Promotion & Awareness

Award promotion and awareness may involve:

- Internal Island Health promotion
- Island Health news release
- Island Health social media
- Community partners
- School and school district social media

## Review

- Applications reviewed from April 01 to 30 each year by the Regional Harm Reduction team
- Applications reviewed for:
  - impact of the work, rather than the scale of the project
  - meaningful engagement with harm reduction
  - demonstrated importance of work to the local community
  - clear identification of a substance use/drug poisoning emergency harm reduction need
  - clear identification of the actions taken within the project to reduce harm
  - clear engagement with, or involvement of, the project's target population
  - success of the project: demonstrated impact
  - major learnings related to the project
  - validated work by referee
  - priority consideration will be given to work in Indigenous communities and/or to Indigenous-identifying applicants

## Receipt

- Award recipient(s) will be notified in May each year
- Awarded in June each year
- Island Health will connect with the recipient(s) school to determine a suitable venue for award receipt (e.g.: assembly, graduation, end of year awards)
  - If the school is unable to accommodate, or the recipient(s) is/are not in school, Island Health will determine another suitable ceremony venue for award receipt, ideally within the recipient(s) home community
- Award recipient(s) will be publicized across Island Health social media channels

# Application

## Process

- Nomination or self-application
- Accepted from mid-December to March 31 each year
- Project completed at any time of year prior to application
- Project must be completed at time of application
- Applications available from the Island Health webpage at:  
<http://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/youth-substance-use/youth-harm-reduction-award>
- Application submission via email to [harmreduction@islandhealth.ca](mailto:harmreduction@islandhealth.ca)
- Application must be accompanied by a project reference from a non-family adult (e.g.: teacher, employer, coach, mentor)

## Information

The following information will be required as part of the application:

- Applicant/nominee name(s), date(s) of birth, Island Health region
- Harm reduction area/topic
- Project impact (intended and actual)
- Description of project (written, audio or video)
- Project reference (written, audio or video), as well as referee's name, relationship to project/applicant(s)/nominee(s), & contact information
- Consent for release of personal information (in association with the award only, such as name, age, and any interview comments) if recipient of award