

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT SUBSTANCE USE

A BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH

Canada is facing a national public health emergency due to a significant rise in substance-related overdoses.



Substance use disorders are among the three most common mental health issues in Canada, with youth and young adults aged 15 to 24 facing the highest rates of substance use challenges.



By supporting youth, promoting harm reduction, and encouraging safe behaviours, we can help them develop key skills such as safer decision-making, healthier relationships, improved academic performance, and a reduced risk of substance use disorders.

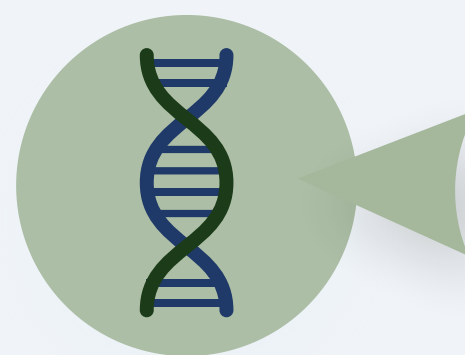
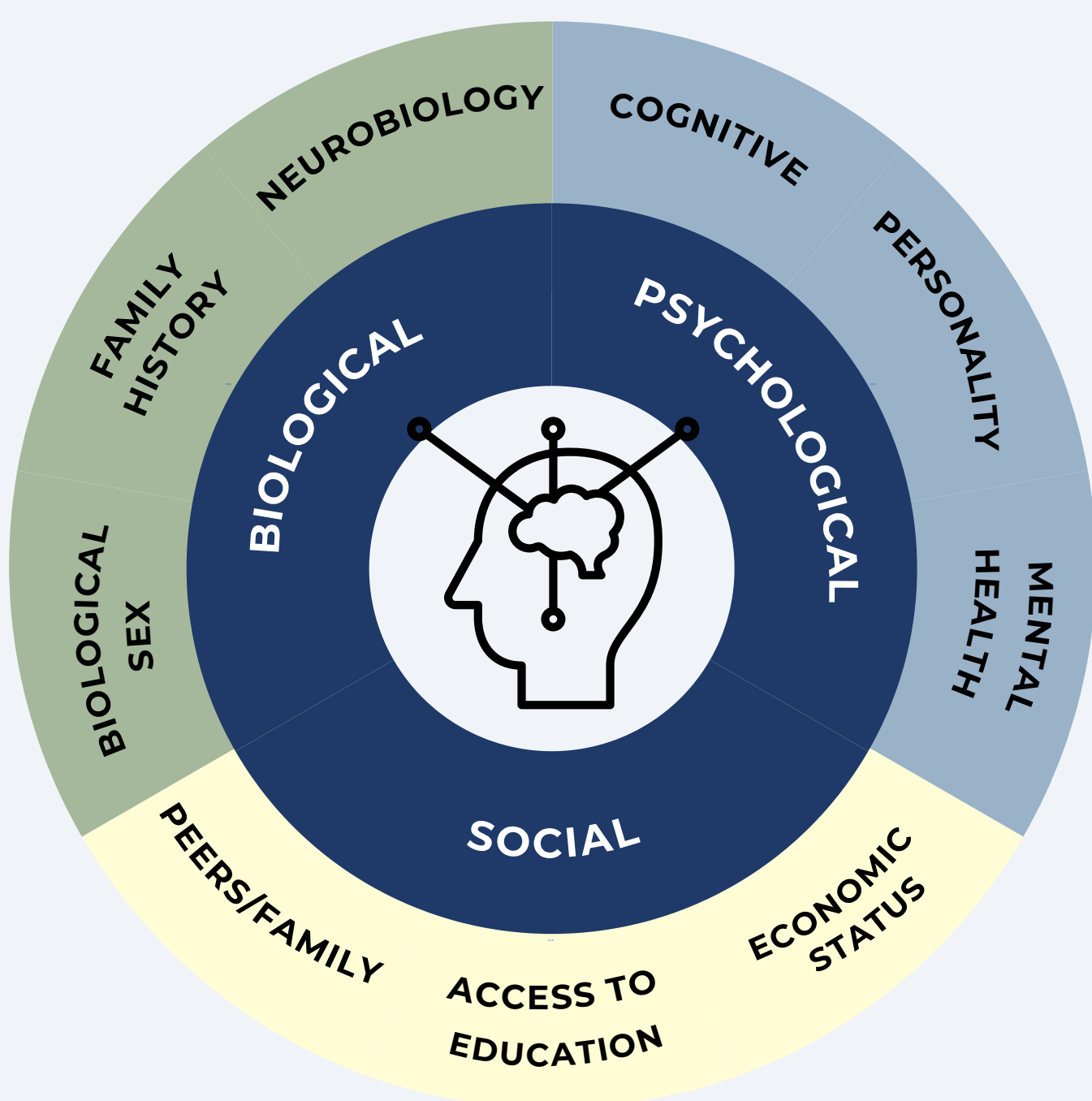


This will empower youth to build a stronger foundation for their future well-being.

Understanding the factors that contribute to substance use is essential to help support youth's health and well-being.

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL

This model explains how the interconnected influences of biological, psychological, and social factors contribute to both the initiation of substance use and the development of substance use disorders



Biological

Biological factors include biological sex, family history (genetics), and neurobiology.



Psychological

Psychological factors include a history of mental illness such as anxiety and depression, cognitive struggles, and certain personality types.



Social

Social factors include an individual's friends and family, socioeconomic status, and access to education.

Figure 1. Adopted by Mackillop et al. (2016)

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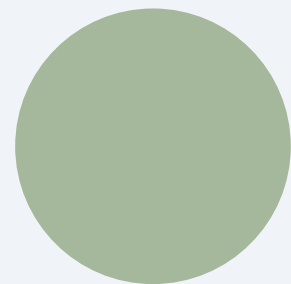
DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

PREVENTION

The biopsychosocial model of addiction is crucial for prevention efforts because it helps us understand the factors that contribute to substance use. This understanding is essential to help design effective prevention and treatment strategies.



Proactive education and intervention efforts can empower individuals and communities to reduce the risks associated with substance use behaviors and promote healthier choices.



Drug Education Centered on Youth Decision Empowerment (DECYDE) (www.decyde.ca) is a strategy developed by an interdisciplinary team at Memorial University of Newfoundland that contributes to addressing this problem through a prevention and harm reduction lens.

TREATMENT

Treatment for substance use disorders involves detoxification, in-patient treatment and out-patient treatment. Various therapies include cognitive behavioural therapy, contingency management, family therapy, medication-assisted treatment, after care programs, and many others.

Suggestions to improve treatment programs to best support young adults:

1

Implement tailored programming

- Add interactive and fun web-based activities
- Add art room, music room, gym
- Tailored group therapy (ie: return to school as opposed to standard return to work) that resonates with the social and psychological challenges faced by young adults.

2

Implement flexible programming

- Altering structure of average day as opposed to all day group therapy sessions
- More informal conversations for therapy sessions instead of group therapy
- Flexible length of programs and days
- Flexibility for patients at different stages of recovery
- Flexibility around smoking rules (allowing individuals to smoke cigarettes if it means not dropping out of the treatment program).
- Flexibility will ensure that those that may struggle psychologically can still benefit from the program.

3

Increase staff and family education

- Increase education through motivational interviewing, communicating positive stories of people with SUDs, and education on the biological/family component of the biopsychosocial model of addiction.

4

Miscellaneous

- Ensuring a balance of ages in the program
- Ensuring young adults return to positive post-discharge environments that address social aspects of the biopsychosocial model of addiction.
- Involving HCPs in the design of the programs

Findings from Dalton et al. (2021)

Citations

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3. Dalton, K., Bishop, L., Darcy, S., et al. (2020). Piecing Together the Puzzle of Success: Attending to the Developmental Needs of Emerging Adults in Substance Use Disorder Programming. *The Canadian Journal of Addiction*, 11(3), 15-24
4. Dalton K, Bishop L, Darcy S, et al. Investigating interventions that lead to the highest treatment retention for emerging adults with substance use disorder: a systematic review. *Addict Behav*. 2021;122:107005.
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