



Canadian Centre
on Substance Use
and Addiction

Centre canadien sur
les dépendances et
l'usage de substances

PEP – MA
Partenariat en
éducation postsecondaire
Méfaits de l'alcool



PEP – AH
Postsecondary
Education Partnership
Alcohol Harms

PEP-AH Guide to Getting Started

Welcome to PEP-AH

Welcome to the **Post-Secondary Education Partnership – Alcohol Harms (PEP-AH)**, an expanding group of universities and colleges from across Canada, together with the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) and Universities Canada. This network supports nation-wide efforts to reduce the harms related to alcohol consumption on campus.

PEP-AH members are using an evidence-based framework that includes five strategic areas, recommended initiatives and measurement indicators to develop action plans for alcohol harm reduction on their campuses.

PEP-AH members come together to share knowledge, expertise and the results of their ongoing efforts to reduce alcohol-related harms on campus.

Purpose of PEP-AH Guide to Getting Started

Collectively, we have been working towards reducing alcohol harms on campuses for a number of years. In that time, we have experienced a number of successes and challenges. We want to share our experiences to help all PEP-AH members be successful. This guide outlines PEP-AH's origins and structure and then details suggestions for getting started, approaching the implementation of our evidence-based framework on your campus, and establishing the go-to group (PEP-AH Campus Team) who will work to reduce alcohol harms on your campus.

Purpose of PEP-AH Action Guide

This document, which accompanies the *PEP-AH Guide to Getting Started*, lays out resources for your Campus Team to plan, implement and evaluate your initiatives on campus. The processes outlined in the *Action Guide* and the resources it provides are meant to help build the capacity of your Campus Team. The resources help teams to assess alcohol-related prevention on their campus and to plan, implement and evaluate new initiatives.

PEP-AH Framework

The PEP-AH framework was developed in collaboration with the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. The framework builds from the best available evidence to show where campuses should invest their efforts to reduce alcohol harms (see [Reducing the Harms Related to Alcohol on Canadian Campuses](#)). It lays out five strategic areas to focus on and provides 14 recommendations across the strategic areas that show the most promise to reduce alcohol harms on campuses. The PEP-AH framework helps your campus answer the question, “What are we supposed to do to address alcohol harms?” It suggests long-term initiatives such as establishing a broad community coalition, but also, importantly, shorter-term campus-based actions that you can do now to reduce alcohol harms. These initiatives can help you improve the health and well-being of students, staff, faculty and the community.



Figure 1: PEP-AH Framework

The PEP-AH Process

In our experience, the process of implementing successful alcohol harm reduction initiatives is non-linear, but progresses through the same broad stages when it is successful. Engaging a dedicated team is covered in this document. The remaining four stages are covered in the *PEP-AH Action Guide*, which accompanies this document.

- a) Engaging a dedicated team
- b) Assessing what is already happening on your campus
- c) Planning an initiative
- d) Implementing an initiative
- e) Evaluating an initiative

The PEP-AH process allows for multiple iterations and flexibility. To deliver effective initiatives requires a flexible approach that allows for revisiting all aspects of an initiative to improve it. It might



mean, for instance, re-engaging an important group so that you better understand their work and can plan a new initiative, or moving back to the planning stage while implementing an initiative in order to improve it or change your approach (see Fine-tune Your Initiative in *PEP-AH Action Guide*). We have also experienced false starts, and the need to take a step back and rethink our approach. The key to any single successful PEP-AH initiative is to keep moving, even if that means turning your time and effort back to an earlier step to ensure that your work is successful on your campus.

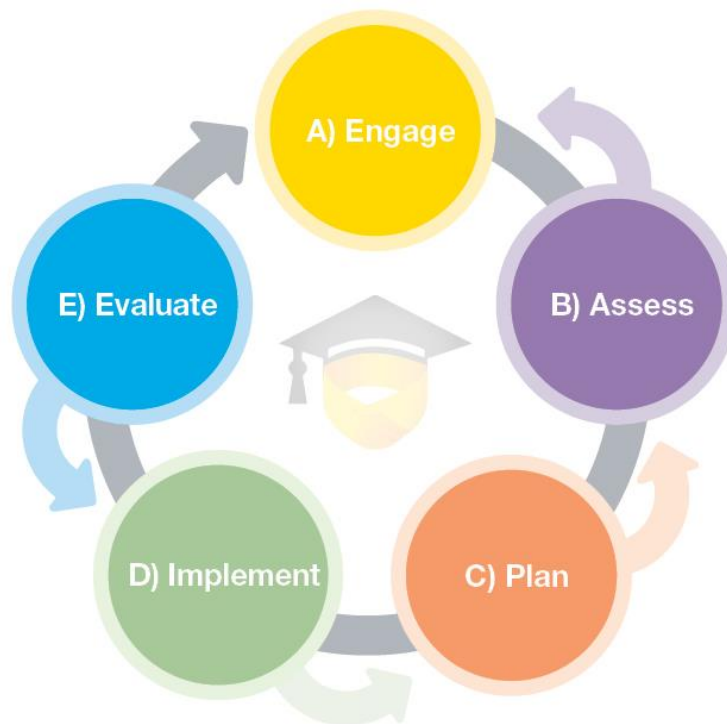


Figure 2: PEP-AH Process: Steps to Implementing Successful Initiatives

We want your Campus Team to jump in and get started! It might make sense to move forward in multiple strategic areas with the knowledge that Environmental and System approaches and initiatives (Strategic Area 3, 4 and 5) will move differently and generally take more time, than addressing Individual approaches and initiatives (Strategic Areas 1 and 2). Our advice is to move forward with a manageable number of initiatives (as few as one), and to take the time to build up your team’s ability to implement an initiative before starting something new. Some opportunities will be quick wins; others will take more time and effort. The ability to rethink and move forward as a team takes time, and the best way to learn is to get started. It is worth the time and effort to build up your team, as this translates into initiatives that are more effective.

Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.
Arthur Ashe

The Importance of a PEP-AH Campus Team

Establishing a PEP-AH Campus Team is essential to reducing alcohol harms on Canadian campuses. A Campus Team is the main point of contact between PEP-AH and campuses. Having diverse perspectives represented on the Campus Team can help you develop an action plan that will work for more students, staff, faculty and other partners. Focused, strong and well-established teams can



effectively address the issue of alcohol on campuses: experienced PEP-AH partners have seen very little reduction in alcohol harms without them.

Connecting across Canada

As you embark on your work building a PEP-AH Campus Team, we want to emphasize a few points.

1. This work is important and you are a crucial part of it.

Alcohol harms on campuses need to be addressed by dedicated individuals, but no one person can address this issue and improve his or her community alone. Working with others through a strong Campus Team, with the support of others on your campus and of PEP-AH will help you be successful.

2. You are not alone.

PEP-AH has been structured to connect people, and to connect efforts to reduce alcohol harms across campuses. Please reach out to us and other PEP-AH partners.

- **Connect with PEP-AH Regional Leads.** Your Campus Team is encouraged to reach out to Regional Leads (contact pepah-pepma@ccsa.ca for more details). These leads are available to help you connect with other PEP-AH Campus Teams and to the PEP-AH Advisory Committee.
- **Connect with other PEP-AH Campus Teams.** If you know of a campus like yours that is doing good work to reduce alcohol harms, reach out to them and start a conversation (see [PEP-AH Members](#)).
- **Connect with the PEP-AH Advisory Committee.** We are happy to help or connect you with someone who can help (pepah-pepma@ccsa.ca). The PEP-AH Advisory Committee holds an annual national PEP-AH meeting so that we can connect in person and hear about your work (see [PEP-AH Events](#)).

3. Addressing alcohol harms is long-term work.

Alcohol harms are an ongoing social issue. A Campus Team can take important steps, but it is important to realize up front that, while a successful initiative can help to address alcohol harms, no one initiative solves alcohol harms.

Engaging a Dedicated Team

In this section, we cover how to establish a well-balanced and diverse PEP-AH Campus Team with clear roles, while encouraging flexibility and ensuring the ability to build capacity.

A Balanced Membership

In our experience, successful campus teams have included at least one:

1. Student leader
2. Faculty member
3. Senior campus administration representative (e.g., dean of students, student service director, etc.)

Additionally, we've seen even more success when the team has included:

4. Campus services representative (e.g., security services and residence life)
5. Additional key stakeholders (e.g., health services, campus bar services, recruitment officer, etc.)

Students play an important role in supporting the success of alcohol harm reduction initiatives on campus. Students can extend the perspective of your Campus Team by offering a perspective from



diverse cultural backgrounds, from on-campus and off-campus experiences, and with links to other students, student groups and student initiatives. When Campus Teams are more than five members, consider multiple memberships for students to ensure that the student voice informs action.

The optimal mix of members helps Campus Teams make significant progress toward action on their initiatives. A balanced team promotes the following qualities:

- Student buy-in and the student voice to help shape your initiatives;
- Faculty buy-in for research capacity and understanding of academic culture;
- Senior administration approval to move forward;
- The ability to enhance campus services; and
- Broader support among campus stakeholders.

The lack of members in any area brings the avoidable challenges shown in the figure below. If you cannot have the optimal mix of team members on your PEP-AH Campus Team, think through how you can mitigate their absence by building links with other stakeholder groups.

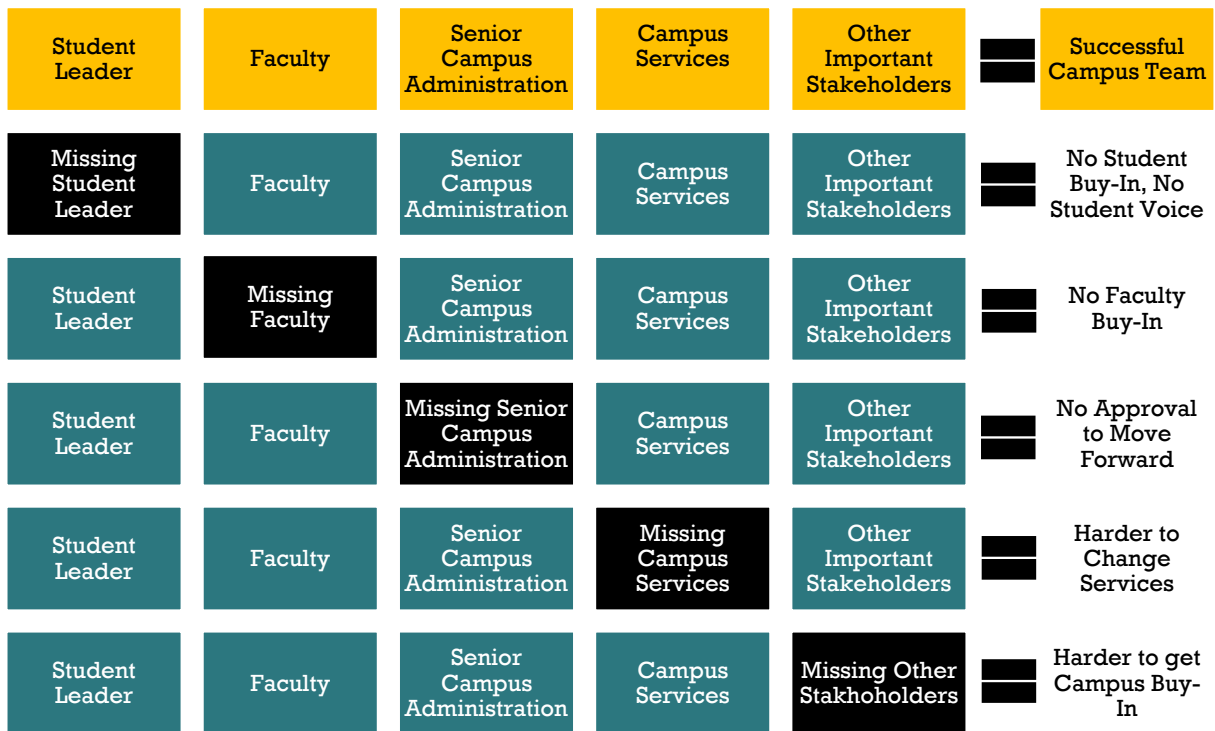


Figure 3: A Balanced, Successful PEP-AH Campus Team

Clarification of Team Roles

Some campus teams have chosen to build a formal structure around their team roles, with a Terms of Reference and very clearly defined roles (e.g., informing, consulting, seeking approval, developing documents, hosting events, etc.). Some teams haven't developed any formal structure, choosing instead to simply get together and move forward with developing and implementing initiatives. Both formal and informal approaches can be successful. Choosing one approach over the other might depend on a number of factors, including the size of your campus, the mix of skills, experience and



capacity on the team, and the size and complexity of the initiatives you have chosen to implement. You might not need to choose a structure right away; some successful teams have formalized their structures as they got started.

Establishing a Core Team and Working Groups

As you implement your action plan, your team might find it necessary to have smaller working groups dedicated to planning, implementing or evaluating specific initiatives. Work towards clarifying how these working groups stay connected with your core team, and how they move their specific work forward. If your core team has formalized its work through a Terms of Reference or some other mechanism, consider formalizing the role of working groups as well. Working groups are another opportunity to engage diverse students and other stakeholders across your campus. Brainstorm with your group about who would make sense on a working group before you move forward: we have found that early conversations save time later.

In some cases, smaller working groups are a good opportunity to engage students who represent diverse perspectives. These might include, for instance, students with lived experience of problematic substance use, international students, LGBTQ students, commuter students, students living off-campus and students who represent others through their involvement in diverse student organizations and committees. Students should be leaders and partners in this work.

Holding Flexible, Regular Team Meetings

Schedule regular meetings to keep the work moving forward on your campus, but be flexible. Your campus, like all PEP-AH partner campuses, has its own rhythm dictated by the start of classes, reading weeks, holidays, exams and summer semesters. In building your Campus Team, look at the calendar as it relates to your campus and move forward accordingly. While it might be tempting to set a recurring meeting for your team and push onwards at all costs, consider the effect on student leaders, faculty and other members of the team who might feel stretched to the limit or are not on campus at given times of the year.

Experienced PEP-AH partners have seen campus teams move forward successfully when they respected the rhythm of their campus and team members. Adjust the frequency and intensity of your

Student leaders should not be:

- Manipulated (follow instructions without understanding the work)
- Token (members, but with no decision-making power)
- Decoration (used to augment a cause through their presence)

Student leaders should be:

- Informed (know how their work will contribute to the project as a whole)
- Consulted (advise Campus Team on ideas and projects)
- Given opportunities to lead (initiatives are developed and student leaders help execute the plan)

PEP-AH student leaders should be:

- Equal partners (with shared decision making and equal power balance between students and other Campus Team members)
- Leaders (who have the opportunity to create a project idea and engage the Campus Team to make it happen)

Adapted from Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (2016)



meetings to move forward, while balancing the needs of the different team members so that they can stay involved in the work. At some points of the academic year that might mean just staying in the loop. At other points that could mean having a weekly meeting.

Building Capacity on Your Team

PEP-AH has seen students empowered to innovate on their campus and take on new roles to move forward successfully to reduce alcohol harms. Look for opportunities to empower all members of your team to move forward, to try something new and to stretch their abilities. Your team might realize when they begin an initiative that it needs to shore up particular skills. You might have contacts who can help to build skills, or on-campus training or resources that your team can access. You can build the capacity of your team before you start an initiative or while in the middle of an initiative.

Engagement Tips

- Share key messages about alcohol harms. In your recruiting efforts, share key messages about alcohol harms on your campus ([Communications Resources](#)). Messages about alcohol harms could help attract action-oriented people to the team.
- Engage students through placements and practicums. PEP-AH partners have noted success recruiting students through placements, practicums and co-curricular experiential learning opportunities. These students are often eager and ready to get to work, and have a set amount of time to commit to your Campus Team.
- Food helps bring people together. We have seen successful teams and campus initiatives built, in part, by providing food. A noon meeting is easier for team members to attend when lunch is provided. It also helps bring a social aspect to the work.
- Be flexible. Some team members might be interested in joining a Campus Team, but also engaged in other opportunities and activities. Work with your team and be flexible, so that team members can balance a commitment to PEP-AH with other commitments.
- Use your network. In building your team and planning, implementing and evaluating your work, take advantage of your team's contacts. Other people on campus can help your team reach out.
- Plan for turnover. As students graduate, faculty move to other campuses and staff take on new opportunities, your Campus Team membership can change. You will need a plan that accounts for turnover. You might consider getting a membership commitment from campus organizations, so that the organizations are linked to your team and can help recruit new representatives.

Resources

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