



Atlantic Regional Symposium

October 25, 2019

Hosted by Dalhousie University

Participants

Dalhousie University, Saint Thomas University, Acadia University, Saint Mary's University, Mount Allison University (total number of participants: 8)

Symposium Goal

The symposium provides the space for students across Atlantic Canada to participate in regional discussion, networking and knowledge sharing about alcohol harm reduction initiatives, including drinking culture, characteristics and drivers of the drinking culture, and identifying successful student-led initiatives happening on each campus.

Discussion Topics

- PEP-AH Guide to Getting Started, PEP-AH Action Guide and Worksheets, PEP-AH Strategic Framework
- Inventory exercise, and how to use the framework to identify gaps on campus
- Summer LEAHP Academy presentation by Madi Sutton
- Sharing of campus climate in terms of PEP-AH framework and alcohol and substance use harm reduction

Outcomes

- Gap with older staff and faculty in terms of buy-in with security staff, higher-level administration for supporting harm reduction initiatives in some institutions – making a cultural shift for harm reduction takes time
- Need to have multi-pronged tactics to address students and meet them where they are – what these look like on our different campuses in the Atlantic Region
- Sharing successful development plan for initiative, programs – what works and what doesn't – meeting students where they are requires various tactics
- Discussion: need to provide alternative programming for students who don't drink, recognizing that many of them are international students
- Discussion: need to provide domestic students with education on how to drink safely through peer-to-peer outreach in a way that resonates with students
- All institutions sharing the success tackling strategic areas of the framework and where there are the most challenges
- Challenges different for rural or city campuses in terms of working with community and getting community buy-in



Next Steps

- Identifying a new student representative to attend the national meeting in January and CACUSS in May (position remains open but we had some interest from participants)
- Student and administration leads to continue efforts to connect all Atlantic institutions in this work
- Sending invitations for the next symposium late in summer to ensure better participation by region
- Development of a PEP-AH Atlantic Region Facebook group to share initiatives and information among various campuses
- Outreach to student leads from institutions that did not attend the symposium to join knowledge sharing Facebook group

Additional Content

After two unsuccessful Atlantic Regional symposia cancellations due to unforeseen weather, the Atlantic Region is ecstatic we had an opportunity to finally bring students together to discuss alcohol and substance use harm reduction on our campuses. The Atlantic Regional Symposium on October 25, 2019, has inspired attendees to continue their hard work on their campuses, and has inspired students to find more ways to connect with one another on programs and initiatives.

Challenges still exist in deeply rooted in negative perceptions of harm reduction by staff and faculty on some campuses. PEP-AH could be help by doing outreach, sharing more evidence-based initiatives and knowledge from CCSA with Atlantic Region students and administrative teams. This outreach and knowledge can help students get buy-in from their institutions for a harm reduction approach to alcohol and substance use. This is the only way to begin to change the culture of heavy drinking in the Atlantic Region.





Student leaders discussing campus climate at the PEP-AH Atlantic Regional Symposium



Student leaders attending the PEP-AH Atlantic Regional Symposium