



Western CT Coalition is the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization servicing the 43 towns of western Connecticut. We work with strategic partners to recognize the strengths in our communities that help build resilience and prevent the harms related to substance use, suicide risk, and problem gambling. We plan, educate and advocate for a high level behavioral health system addressing needs across the lifespan.

Region 5 Cannabis Education and Awareness Program

On July 1, 2021, cannabis was legalized for adult use in Connecticut. The Cannabis Education and Awareness Program aims to amplify efforts within DMHAS Region 5 to use evidence-based approaches to:

- **educate and inform community stakeholders** about youth cannabis use prevention, and
- facilitate and encourage responsible adult cannabis use among people 21 years and older.



The Be In The Know state campaign aims to inform CT residents about strategies for responsible adult use, current adult-use cannabis laws, education about safe storage, and empowerment for communities to bolster prevention efforts for individuals under the age of 21.

Balancing Hope and Concern: Youth Cannabis Trends



Most youth in Region 5 are not using cannabis: 90.3% of high school students and 98% of middle school students chose not to use cannabis in the past month!

According to the Connecticut Hospital Association, data shows that Connecticut Poison Control Center receives 40 to 60 calls a month on average for children 17 and younger who have reportedly inhaled or ingested cannabis; edibles are of particular concern, especially among children 6 and younger.



Region 5 Cannabis Prevention and Awareness: 2024 - 2025 Goals



Conduct a region wide assessment of current statistics, impact of cannabis use, access to cannabis, regional risk factors that contribute to youth cannabis use, and available resources



Build capacity among staff, community members, and stakeholders, including professional development opportunities, data walks, and the latest information on the impact of cannabis use within Region 5



Disseminate materials and share information, including the Be In The Know campaign, at community and campus events, through social media presence, and by engaging with community partners



Provide education for various sectors, including educators, cannabis retailers, community partners, youth, and parents



Build relationships with retailers to promote best practices and the importance of preventing youth access

For more information on the Cannabis Prevention and Awareness initiative, please contact Chelsea at ckapitancek@wctcoalition.org or visit wctcoalition.org to access resources and current initiatives.