

Standard Alignment Brief

Alignment with Integrated Youth Services

How the Pan-Canadian Standard for School-Based Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Intervention Aligns with Integrated Youth Services

At-a-Glance

The new pan-Canadian standard, *School-Based Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Intervention: A Multi-Tiered and Developmental Approach for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Schools in Canada* (the Standard) and Integrated Youth Services (IYS) share a common purpose: ensuring that young people can access the right support at the right time, in environments designed around their needs.

IYS is an initiative — defined by ten consensus-based guiding principles — that brings mental health, substance use, primary care, peer and family support, and social services together at accessible, youth-friendly points of care for young people ages 12–25.

The **Standard (2026)** provides the school-level guidance that complements this community-based service system: clauses organized by developmental stage across the K–12 continuum, tiered support, and role-specific recommendations that position schools as health-promoting environments and as natural pathways into care. Together, they offer Canadian communities a coherent pathway from school-based prevention and early intervention to integrated, wraparound youth care.

© 2026 Anchoring Change

This Alignment Brief was prepared on behalf of the Anchoring Change Executive Committee by: Tonje Molyneux, Ava Chaplin, Rhowena Martin, Shea Wood, Sarah McIlwaine, Shawna Meister, Reg Klassen, Ryan Fahey, Matt Drabenstott, and Emily Jenkins.

Please cite this document as follows:

Anchoring Change. (2026). How the Pan-Canadian Standard for School-Based Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Intervention Aligns with Integrated Youth Services. Vancouver: Anchoring Change.

Anchoring Change is a national initiative designed to transform how schools across Canada address substance use through coordinated, evidence-informed prevention, education, and intervention. Its approach is grounded in developmental and prevention science, student well-being, and the practical realities of education systems.

The initiative is led through a collaborative partnership between Wellstream: The Canadian Centre for Innovation in Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of British Columbia, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA), the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA), Physical and Health Education (PHE) Canada, and the Students Commission of Canada.

For more information about Anchoring Change:

Email: info@anchoringchange.ca

Visit: www.anchoringchange.ca

Aussi disponible en français.

Purpose of This Document

This brief is designed for IYS networks and service providers, public health and education decision-makers, community partners, and other interest holders who want to understand how the new Standard relates to IYS. Specifically, this document:

- Maps the Standard against the ten Pan-Canadian Principles for IYS
- Highlights the distinct and complementary contributions each makes across the continuum of prevention, early identification, and intervention
- Illustrates how schools implementing the Standard and IYS sites can work together in Canadian communities
- Supports adoption and partnership conversations to facilitate a coordinated approach

About the Two Resources

Integrated Youth Services

Integrated Youth Services (IYS) is a model of care that coordinates multiple health and social services around the needs of young people, typically through a single point of access or “one-stop shop”. Services delivered through IYS sites commonly include mental health services, substance use counselling, primary care (including sexual health), peer and family/caregiver support, work and study supports, system navigation, housing and other social services, and traditional Indigenous well-being and cultural practices. The approach has gained momentum across Canada since 2013, and almost every province and territory in Canada now has or is developing an IYS network of service delivery sites, alongside a dedicated Indigenous network.

The Pan-Canadian Standard (2026)

Developed through a partnership between Wellstream: The Canadian Centre for Innovation in Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of British Columbia, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA), the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA), Physical and Health Education (PHE) Canada, and the Students Commission of Canada, under the management of CSA Group, the Standard provides a structured set of clauses organized across three developmental stages (K–Grade 5, Grades 6–9, Grades 10–12), three tiers of support (universal, targeted, intensive), and integrated within a Health Promoting Schools framework. Each clause assigns responsibility to school policymakers, administrators, or staff and uses normative language (“shall,” “should,” “may”) to distinguish the potential for impact of each recommendation. The Standard is voluntary and designed to meet schools where they are.

How They Relate

IYS and the Standard operate at different but complementary levels of the same youth-serving system. IYS is a service-delivery model that organizes how mental health, substance use, and related supports are provided to young people through accessible, integrated, youth-designed points of care in the community. The Standard is a school-system framework that provides guidance on what K–12 school communities should do to create environments that support substance use prevention, education, and intervention within a Health Promoting Schools approach.

Because the Standard’s tiered approach explicitly calls for school–community partnerships and pathways to specialized care — particularly at Tiers 2 and 3 — IYS offers the integrated service infrastructure those pathways lead to. And because IYS seeks trusted, accessible, low-barrier entry points where young people already are, schools implementing the Standard help extend that reach, creating the welcoming environments, early identification practices, and warm connections that help young people find their way to IYS supports. Partnering with IYS strengthens the school–community ecosystem that makes the Standard’s referral and intervention clauses achievable.

Alignment with the Ten Pan-Canadian Principles for IYS

The Pan-Canadian Guidance for IYS sets out ten principles, organized under three categories, that describe what integrated care for youth should look like in practice. While the Standard outlines guidance for schools rather than IYS sites, its clauses, guiding principles, and frameworks align closely with each of these principles. The table below maps the ten IYS principles to corresponding elements of the Standard.

IYS Principle	In Integrated Youth Services	In the Standard
ACCESSIBLE TO ALL		
Accessibles	Services are easy to find and access, have low or no barriers, and are experienced as a seamless continuum.	The Standard positions schools as trusted, health promoting settings where young people already are, with early identification and warm connections that lower the barrier to reaching support, helping create a seamless path from classroom to care.
Culturally Safe	Services are culturally safe, and support youth from Indigenous and equity-owed communities.	Equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization (EDID) is a guiding principle, operationalized through culturally responsive screening, engaging Elders and cultural supports, and decolonizing practice across clauses.
Socially Just	Services commit to social justice through anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and decolonizing practices.	The Standard locates risk in systems rather than individuals, calls for non-punitive and non-exclusionary responses, and embeds EDID and student voice to address the conditions that shape substance use health and related inequities.

IYS Principle	In Integrated Youth Services	In the Standard
CENTRED ON YOUTH		
Engaging	Services engage youth and families/caregivers in development, co-creation, decision making, and governance.	Student voice is a guiding principle, operationalized through student partnership, youth leadership in health, and co-design clauses; family/caregiver engagement is a named evidence domain with aligned messaging and dedicated resources.
Youth-Centred	Services are youth-friendly, developmentally appropriate, strength- and relationship-based, and inclusive of all youth.	Clauses are organized across three developmental stages and grounded in strengths-based, belonging-centred approaches; the Standard is inclusive of all students, including those using substances.
Responsive	Services are responsive to stated needs and respectful of choice and self-determination.	Tiered supports match the intensity of response to student need; harm minimization and non-judgmental, non-punitive responses respect young people's circumstances and choices.
Learn and Improve	Services continuously learn and improve through data, research, evidence, and wisdom.	Evidence-informed practice is foundational to all clauses; the Standard encourages schools to draw on student well-being surveys, school climate assessments, and referral data to monitor impact and improve over time.

IYS Principle	In Integrated Youth Services	In the Standard
INTEGRATED AND WHOLISTIC SERVICES		
Collaborative	Services are delivered through effective, collaborative partnerships.	School–community partnerships are a named evidence domain; clauses recommend partnerships with community, allied health, cultural, and Indigenous organizations across all tiers and stages — the school side of the IYS partnership.
Wholistic	Services take a wholistic, trauma-informed, and harm reduction approach.	The Standard adopts harm minimization as a guiding principle and embeds trauma-informed, belonging-based practice; it attends to the whole student within school, family, and community contexts.
Health	Services intervene early and promote health and health equity.	Early identification and Tier 1 universal prevention reach every student before harms emerge; the Standard promotes health equity through an EDID lens and a Health Promoting Schools framework.

What the Standard Adds

IYS provides the integrated, accessible service system for young people who need care. The Standard complements this by providing guidance for the school-level architecture and upstream prevention that a service-delivery framework, by design, does not specify. Adopting the Standard strengthens the continuum of supports spanning universal prevention through intensive, individualized service delivery.

Feature	What This Means for Communities with IYS
Universal, school-based prevention	IYS is primarily oriented toward youth who are seeking or referred to services. The Standard adds universal (Tier 1) prevention reaching every student — belonging-based prevention, healthy norms, social-emotional competence, and nurturing student interests. In this way, the Standard contributes to reducing risk before harms emerge and before health and social services are needed.
Full K–12 developmental scaffolding	IYS typically serves young people from ages 12 to 25. The Standard provides age-appropriate clauses across early and middle childhood (K–Grade 5), early and middle adolescence (Grades 6–9), and late adolescence (Grades 10–12), ensuring that prevention begins early and continues across the ages IYS sites most often engage.
Reaching youth where they already are	Most young people spend their days in school. The Standard equips schools to identify emerging concerns early and create warm, low-barrier connections to IYS, helping ensure young people who could benefit reach integrated services.
Clause-level specificity with assigned responsibilities	The Standard specifies who is responsible for each action (school policy makers, administrators, or staff) and uses “shall,” “should,” or “may” to distinguish potential for impact, giving school partners in an IYS community a clear, consistent framework for their contribution.
Policy and environment clauses	The Standard includes clauses directing boards and districts to enact strengths-based policies, minimize exclusionary practices, and implement non-punitive responses to substance use incidents — the system-level conditions that keep young people connected to school and to care.
Implementation continuum	A developing–building–sustaining model recognizes that schools start from different places and supports gradual, context-dependent progress rather than immediate compliance.

Feature	What This Means for Communities with IYS
National standard developed through a rigorous CSA Group process	Developed through a CSA Group consensus process with national public review in French and English, and enhanced engagement with youth, educators, health professionals, and other interest holders, the Standard offers IYS communities a shared, pan-Canadian reference point for what schools are doing in support of substance use prevention, education, and intervention — reducing variation across jurisdictions.

What IYS Brings to a Standard-Implementing School Community

IYS offers Canadian school communities implementing the Standard the service infrastructure that a school-level framework alone cannot provide:

- **Integrated, specialized services.** IYS brings together mental health, substance use, primary care, peer and family support, and social services in one accessible place — one of the key destinations to which the Standard’s Tier 2 and Tier 3 referral and intervention pathways are intended to lead.
- **Rapid, low-barrier access.** With no service refusal and no referral needed, IYS sites give schools a dependable, youth-friendly place to connect students quickly when concerns are identified.
- **Continuity of care across the transition to adulthood.** By serving young people up to age 25, IYS supports continuity beyond Grade 12 — helping bridge the gap as students leave the school system.
- **Family/caregiver supports beyond the school.** IYS sites offer groups, workshops, counselling, and peer support for families/caregivers, extending the Standard’s family engagement clauses into community-based support.
- **A learning health system and data infrastructure.** Through IYS-Net, sites participate in a pan-Canadian learning health system that generates evidence to improve service delivery — a data and evaluation backbone that can inform school-level implementation of the Standard.

Using the Standard and IYS Together

The Standard and IYS are complementary frameworks that meet young people at different points along the same continuum of care. Here is how Canadian communities might use them together:



Build Shared Pathways Between Schools and IYS Sites

Schools implementing the Standard and local IYS sites can map clear, two-way pathways: schools identify emerging concerns early (Tier 1–2) and make warm connections to the IYS site, while IYS providers support students' continued engagement with school. This operationalizes the Standard's school–community partnership clauses through a concrete service partner and reflects the IYS commitment to “no wrong door” and warm handovers.



Align Around Youth and Family/Caregiver Voice

Both frameworks centre co-design. Communities can establish shared mechanisms, such as youth advisory groups and family/caregiver input, that inform both the school's implementation of the Standard and the IYS site's service design, reducing duplication and reinforcing a consistent, youth-led approach.



Coordinate Tiered and Stepped Care

The Standard's tiered guidance and the IYS stepped-care model can be aligned so that students move smoothly between school-based universal and targeted supports and the IYS site's more specialized services, ensuring the right level of care at the right time, with no wrong door.



Share Evidence and Improve Together

IYS sites' learning–health system data and the Standard's implementation monitoring and practice scan resources can inform one another, supporting both school-level and service-level learning over time and helping the community understand how prevention and care connect.

A Shared Commitment to Meeting Youth Where They Are

Integrated Youth Services and the Standard share a fundamental conviction: that young people deserve support that is accessible, welcoming, and organized around their needs. IYS offers Canadian communities an integrated, youth-friendly service system that brings the right supports together in one trusted place. The Standard offers Canadian schools a structured framework for prevention, education, and intervention, including connection to care — reaching young people where they spend their days and helping them find their way to IYS when they need more. Together, in communities served by IYS, they equip schools and health and social services to move from fragmented response to a coherent, compassionate, and connected system of support for every young person.

References

- Anchoring Change. (2026). School-Based Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Intervention: A Multi-Tiered and Developmental Approach for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Schools in Canada. <https://anchoringchange.ca/TheStandard>
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (n.d.). Integrated Youth Services Network of Networks Initiative (IYS-Net). <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52912.html>
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (n.d.). IYS-Net: About. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52913.html>
- Graham Boeckh Foundation. (n.d.). What is Integrated Youth Services? <https://grahamboeckhfoundation.org/en/what-we-do/transform-mental-health/integrated-youth-services/>
- Providence Health Care Society (Foundry). (2022). What are Integrated Youth Services anyway? <https://foundrybc.ca>
- Providence Health Care Society (Foundry). (2023–24). Guidance Development and Engagement Summary: A Companion Document to Pan-Canadian Guidance for Integrated Youth Services.
- Providence Health Care Society (Foundry). (2023–24). Pan-Canadian Guidance for Integrated Youth Services: 10 Principles for Improving Integrated Care for Youth.



Learn More:

Anchoring Change is a national initiative to transform school-based substance use prevention, education, and intervention in Canada



www.anchoringchange.ca



info@anchoringchange.ca

