

ANNUAL  
IMPACT  
REPORT  
**2021**

**DRUG  
FREE  
KIDS**  
CANADA.ORG



**Drug Free Kids Canada** Where families come for help

# DFK ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2021

YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16 TO 24 YEARS ARE THE GROUP MOST LIKELY TO REPORT MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE CONCERNS, AND THE ONE LEAST EQUIPPED TO HANDLE PANDEMIC STRESS.<sup>1</sup>



## 2021 – MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

The pandemic has continued to affect the mental health of us all, but especially our youth. At Drug Free Kids Canada, we've been able to use the lessons we learned in 2020 to address the ongoing challenges that we all face. One significant lesson is the understanding that there are important links between mental wellness and substance use by kids, and we've taken steps to ensure that the families we serve have the information they need to navigate the current drug landscape in practical, non-judgmental terms as well as the tools they require to communicate effectively with their kids.

We are grateful for the continued support of our valued corporate partners and donors who stood beside us throughout the year, and we continue to make great strides together. This year, we've begun building and developing strategically targeted projects that will provide tangible, real-time support to parents.



**EDUCATE**

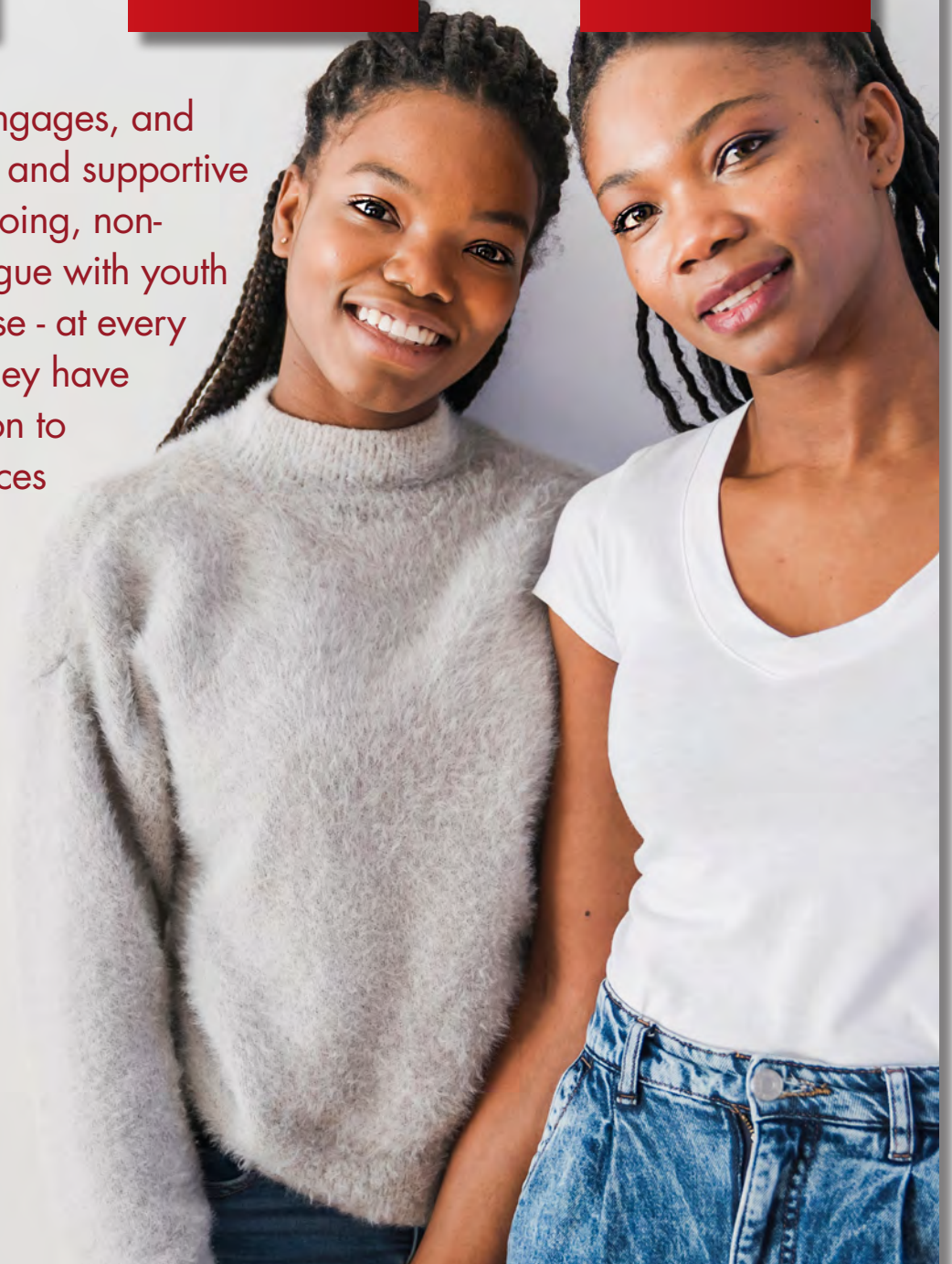


**ENGAGE**



**EMPOWER**

DFKC educates, engages, and empowers parents and supportive adults to have ongoing, non-judgemental dialogue with youth about substance use - at every stage - to ensure they have the right information to make healthy choices for themselves.





## EDUCATE

DFKC ensures that parents understand the challenges youth are presently facing and provides the online resources and innovative tools they can use to help them better support the mental wellness of their children.

## SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH IN 2021

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Only 55% of young people reported they were confident in their ability to cope with pandemic stress – compared to 62% of adults. **In fact, only 1 in 4 youth have reported excellent or very good mental health.**

**42%** of youth have reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms during the pandemic.

**24%** Report moderately severe to severe depression.

**17%** Report having suicidal ideation.

Many are turning to substances like alcohol and cannabis to cope or mask more serious underlying mental health issues; and those who already use alcohol and cannabis are more likely to report increased use or problematic use.

**37%** Increased their use of alcohol

**45%** Increased their use of cannabis

**29%** reported using alcohol problematically

**51%** reported using cannabis problematically

### DFK Website

The information, resources and practical tools we provide on our site contain valuable information on mental health and substance use as well as practical advice for parents – promoting open, ongoing and effective discussions within families and wider communities about problematic substance use prevention. The DFK website continues to be our main informational hub for parents and families and as awareness of DFKC grows, so do our user numbers. 2021 saw a 35% increase in visits, with a total of 272K users - reading through 350K pages of evidence-based youth drug prevention information.

We have begun a website modernisation to ensure that it continues to be a robust, inclusive, stigma-free online platform that meets and supports families where they are at.





# ENGAGE

DFKC’s PSA campaigns continue to be a major piece of the youth drug prevention puzzle; engaging parents to increase their knowledge and open the dialogue about substance use with their kids.

## In 2021, DFKC delivered three highly impactful awareness raising campaigns.

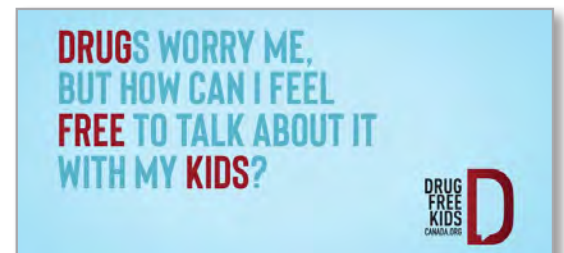
In February 2021, we launched the **“Talking Cannabis 2.0”** campaign, designed to encourage families to have informed, non-judgemental, and on-going conversations with their kids about cannabis to prevent the problematic use of cannabis products. By speaking to parents in a natural, unpretentious way, the creative resonated as a relatable and highly credible message. As with all our PSA campaigns, **Talking Cannabis 2.0** reminded parents that tips and tools to help them have effective conversations can always be found on our website.



In August 2021 we launched our annual National Drug Drop off campaign entitled **“Families shouldn’t share everything”**. Conceived to remind parents that prescription and over-the-counter medications should only be taken by the person for whom they are prescribed, the campaign encouraged ongoing, productive family conversation about medication safety.

This campaign was followed up in November 2021 by a nation-wide branding campaign, **Find the Right Words**, designed to galvanize the public’s recognition of Drug Free Kids Canada as the ‘go-to’ source of information and support for families who need help.

After more than a decade producing internationally recognized, award-winning topical campaigns, it was time to promote greater visibility for the organization. **Find the Right Words** was praised by Canadians in every part of the country and is the perfect preamble to the initiatives we have planned for DFK’s future.



2021 was another successful media year. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our national, regional, local and community media partners, we have been able to reach millions of Canadians across the country who read, see or hear our public service messages on radio, television, print and OOH.

## Engaging Canadian Families with innovative and informative resources

When faced with the stress of the past year in a prolonged pandemic, many parents felt alone and unsure about how they can best support their children.

**We created a number of new resources for parents in collaboration with valued partners and delivered to parents through our Back to School campaign, on our website, in our newsletters to our parent base and via social media.**



## Back-to-School Campaign 2021

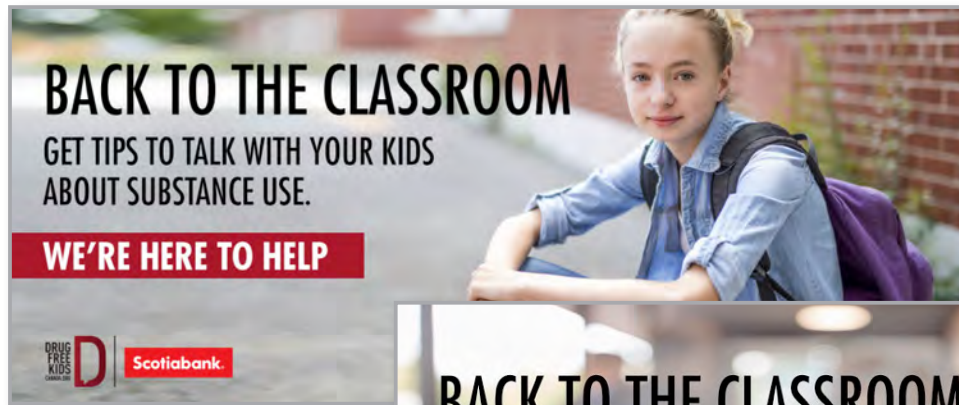
Back to the Classroom campaign in partnership with Scotiabank focused on the return to the classroom setting that most kids experienced in 2021. We created brochures and a video that dealt with important back to school issues that were top-of-mind during the pandemic. These valuable resources continue to live on our site.

[Tailor your drug conversations to your child's age](#)

[Cannabis behind the wheel](#)

[Mental Health and Substance use - is there a link?](#)

[Make those "tough" talks about substance use easy](#)



## DFK Resources

This guide was produced as a doctoral project by Doctor of Pharmacy students at the University of Montréal with the participation of the Drug Free Kids Canada team. It contains evidence-based information about the common over the counter medicine Dextromethorphan, its effects, and offers tools to help parents have a conversation with their kids.

## Other Innovative ways we engage with parents

**Corporate Engagement** – As part of the Corporate Partnership Program (CPP) we moderated webinars to corporate partners Raymond James and Odium Brown Ltd. These webinars feature expert discussions with members of the Advisory Council, family physician specialising in addictions, Dr. John Sader and family counsellor Dr. Jacqueline Smith.





*“A quick note to thank all of you for a very informative and thought-provoking session yesterday! I thoroughly enjoyed it, and I am sure my colleagues did as well.”*  
– Cathy Greer, BBA – Marketing & Sponsorship Manager, Odlum Brown Limited.

### Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Wellbeing – a positive intersection

In May, the Raymond James Foundation organized and hosted RJ Cares 5K4kids – an exciting month-long national fundraising initiative with Drug Free Kids Canada as the beneficiary.

RJCares’ 5K4Kids focused on the importance of mental and physical wellness, and youth substance use prevention.

This unique employee engagement event encouraged participants to take part in physical activities they enjoy while fundraising for an important cause. Almost 500 participants from all over the country ran, cycled, kayaked, hiked, and walked: either alone or with teams of families and friends. The RJCares fundraiser was a resounding success –Raymond James employees, together with the DFK team of employees and board members raised 296,000\$ for Drug Free Kids Canada.



**Community Engagement** – We continue to check in regularly with our community through our newsletters, focus groups and parent surveys to ensure we are providing them with the information they need about youth and substance use and support to enhance mental wellness. By maintaining open channels of communication with our DFK community, we can identify the information parents and adult allies are looking for and respond accordingly in a timely fashion.

### Meeting the needs of parents with new projects

This year, we're pleased to have received the funding to move forward on two important projects.

#### The DFKC Parent Support Hub

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With funding provided by the **Telus Friendly Future Foundation**, The Parent Support Hub will be a one-stop safe, virtual platform that will immediately address parents' concerns about their child's substance use and when required, will give them access to mental health professionals who can support and guide them to best respond to the needs of their child. We anticipate the platform to be ready for spring 2022.

The HUB will provide parents with access to:

- An interactive chat box to answer their questions about youth substance use;
- A link to relevant professional supports, including the ability to schedule a session(s) with a mental health practitioner.
- The opportunity to connect with other parents across the country as they also seek to navigate these issues.
- The Hub will offer all of these direct, and immediate supports at no cost to the user.

#### Collaborate, Learn & Innovate for Canadian Communities (CLICC)

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Our new CLICC initiative, funded by the **Bank of Montreal Financial Group** will build partnerships with local community organizations and work with them to deliver youth drug prevention workshops in underserved Ontario communities, where youth are facing an increased risk of problematic substance use and substance use disorder.

In fact, Ontario was 1 of 3 Canadian provinces accounting for 90% of the opioid toxicity deaths across the country in 2021. Designed as a pilot, this work will prepare us for scale up to other parts of the country beyond 2023.







# WHERE FAMILIES COME FOR HELP

Drug Free Kids Canada engages parents and youth to have ongoing, non-judgmental dialogue about substance use to promote healthy decision-making and to reduce alcohol, cannabis and other substance related harms.

**90%** of people struggling with addiction began using substances in adolescence.<sup>1</sup>

## Empowering parents to have meaningful conversations with kids about substance use is important because:

**One in three** teenagers has been offered drugs at a party, and nearly half of them don't really know how to refuse them.<sup>2</sup>

**21%** of Canadians will meet the criteria for addiction in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

**Parents are the most influential people in their children's lives.**  
**63%** of teens say parents are their preferred source of information on substance and substance use.<sup>4</sup>

**One in three** teenagers report vaping at some point in their lives.<sup>6</sup>

**One in five** Ontario high school students used cannabis in 2019.<sup>5</sup>

## DFKC - Making a positive impact.

The work that Drug Free Kids Canada does is reducing the number of young people struggling with problematic substance use by 1400 teens per year.<sup>7</sup>

That is significant because the combined healthcare, crime, and lost productivity costs to society for every young person suffering from problematic substance use is \$490,000 over their lifetime.<sup>8</sup>

Every dollar invested in DFKC equals \$33 dollars saved by society, representing a strong social return on investment.<sup>9</sup>

1 National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse CASA

2 DFK Tracking Study 2020

3 Canadian Mental Health Association

4 DFK Tracking Study 2020

5 CAMH, Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey 2019

6 The Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey, 2019

7, 8, 9 DFK Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study 2020 DeGroote School of Business





## EMPOWER

Parents continue to be the most important agents of change in preventing the problematic use of substances by young people, and we are excited to develop more direct ways of supporting them with our new projects coming in 2022.

This pandemic has dragged on, but despite the trials we've all faced, DFKC works hard to empower parents' efforts to help their kids develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills that they will need to achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations free of problematic substance use.



# A MESSAGE FROM

**PAUL ALLISON**  
CHAIR OF THE BOARD



**CHANTAL VALLERAND**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## **A evolution in strategy without a change in vision**

DFKC has been known since its inception for generating awareness on substance use and youth through impactful, multimedia campaigns, targeting parents. A natural evolution of this strategy has been to build upon the original intention of DFK and develop more strategically targeted actions to increase parental capacity.

As demonstrated in this report, our activities in 2021 reflect our active pursuit of building capacity by developing tools and tips for parents to engage in informed conversations with their kids about substance use. Securing funding with sturdy corporate partners such as the Telus Friendly Future Foundation and BMO Financial Group will enable DFK to provide primary health and intervention support for parents who are concerned about their child's suspected or confirmed substance use.

Of course, awareness campaigns are still a strong strategic pillar. Education and prevention are at the heart of DFK's mission. We are grateful for our unique relationship with the advertising agency FCB Montreal and more than 60 media partners. These partners provided over \$20M of in-kind media support once again this year, allowing us to reach millions of Canadians. Our generous partners are a pivotal element to our success, and we want to convey a heartfelt thank you to each one of them.

Looking ahead, we are optimistic about DFK's future and its positive impact on Canadian families. By consolidating our equity gained through successful campaigns, we will further materialize DFK's vision by making sure parents have the proper tools and tips to talk with their kids about substance use.

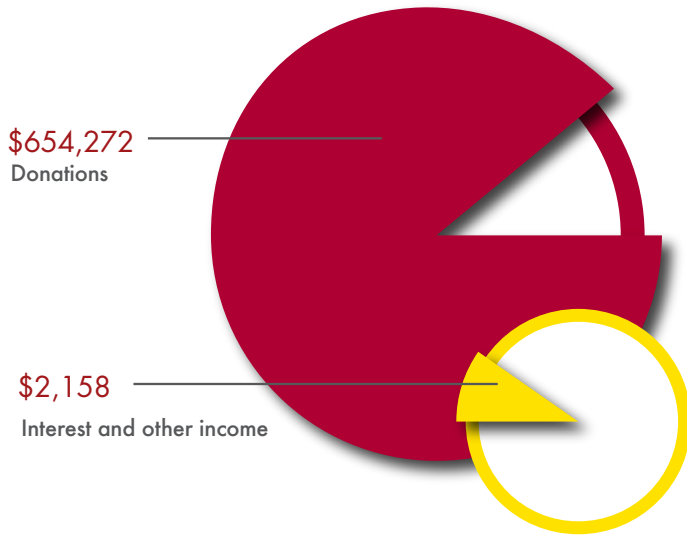
Our youth are the country's greatest asset. Our communities' ultimate health outcomes, productivity, resilience depend on young people making healthy, well-informed choices. DFK will be there to provide support along the way.

Paul Allison  
Chair of the Board

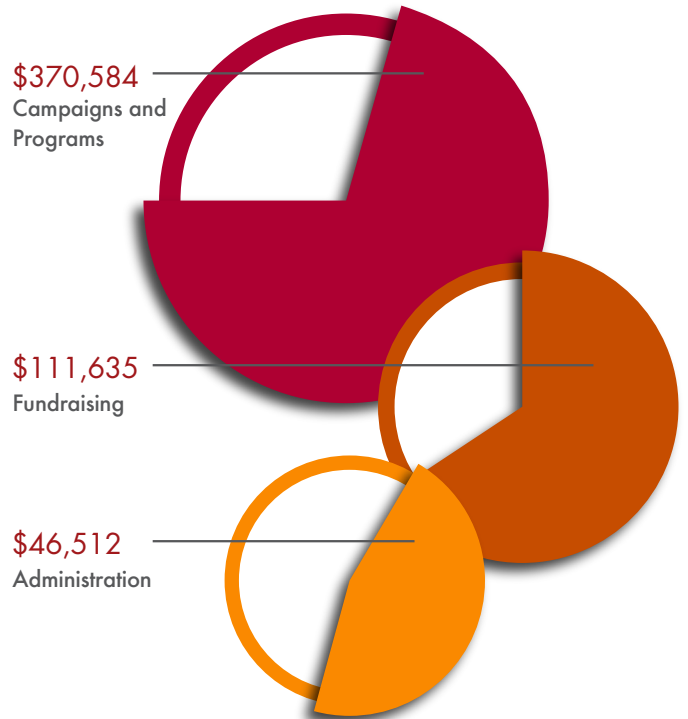
Chantal Vallerand  
Executive Director

# FINANCIALS

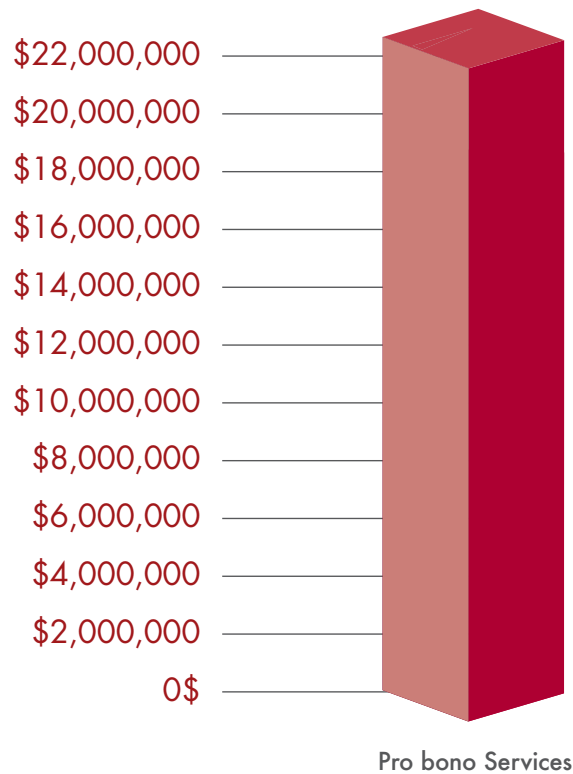
## Revenues \$656,430



## Expenses \$528,732



## 2021



# KEY CORPORATE DONORS

We would like to thank the following companies for their financial support without which we could not accomplish our mission.



# ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Drug Free Kids Advisory Council is comprised of a group of twenty-eight subject matter experts closely involved in the fields of youth substance use, addiction, research and drug prevention.

DFK Canada is honored to have access to their combined expertise to ensure that our website content, our educational tools, products for parents and our communications are up to date with the latest evidence-based information available.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our Board of Directors is comprised of prominent Canadians who oversee the activities of Drug Free Kids Canada and guide the staff to achieve the DFK mission.

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