

Other ways to divert people from the criminal justice to the health system include **multidisciplinary crisis response programs** and **drug treatment courts**.<sup>103</sup> Culturally responsive and trauma-informed crisis response programs, where social or mental health workers accompany police on mental health crisis calls and wellness checks, help ensure that people struggling with mental health conditions are connected with health services rather than being arrested. In communities with drug treatment courts, people arrested for possession are referred to treatment and supportive services instead of being sent to jail. Depending on how they are implemented, drug treatment courts have the potential to reduce the harms associated with incarceration, as well as the risk of overdoses and deaths when people are discharged from prison, while also improving access to treatment.

## Targeting Downstream Drivers

### Educating people about the risks

Both Health Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Health provide information/education about the risks associated with different substances – tailored to populations most at risk of harms. They also actively promote low-risk alcohol and cannabis use guidelines. For example, with the legalization of cannabis, Ontario and Canada:

- provided information/education on the effects of cannabis on the brain and mental health, particularly for youth and young adults
- reinforced the risks and consequences of cannabis-impaired driving
- provided information on how to avoid pediatric cannabis poisonings, including storing edibles safely
- promoted Cannabis Low Risk Use guidelines and the importance of choosing legal products to reduce risk.

Most recently, a number of public health initiatives are trying to raise public awareness of the carcinogenic (i.e. cancer-causing) effects of alcohol.

Figure 11: Ontario Central East’s Regional Cancer Program social media campaign – June 2023

**Both of these can cause cancer**

The risks from 1 glass of alcohol are similar to 1 cigarette.

For more information visit [www.cercp.ca](http://www.cercp.ca)

Central East Regional Cancer Program  
Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)

You don't smoke because you know it can increase your risk of cancer.

Did you know that drinking alcohol also increases your risk of cancer?

Now you know.

Central East Regional Cancer Program  
Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) [www.lakeridgehealth.on.ca/alcoholandcancer](http://www.lakeridgehealth.on.ca/alcoholandcancer)

I just wanted to have fun with my friends...

I just wanted to relax at home...

I just wanted a break...

I did not know drinking alcohol increased my risk of cancer.

Central East Regional Cancer Program  
Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)

Now you know.

Source: Central East Regional Cancer Program. Community resources [Internet]. Scarborough, ON: Central East Regional Cancer Program; [cited 2024 Jan 24]. Printable handouts. Available from: <https://cercp.ca/community-resources/>

Education programs also make people aware of the predisposing factors, such as a mental health condition, that can affect a person’s response to a substance, and encourage pregnant people to protect their children from being exposed to substances prenatally.